

Comments and Responses to the BHA FY 2014 Annual Plan.

The following document contains the comments and responses received on the BHA's FY 2014 Annual Plan. The Plan was put out for public comment on November 1, 2013 and the comment period closed on December 15, 2013 with a public hearing held December 9 2012 in the Boston Public Library Copley Square Branch Commonwealth Salon at 11:00 am and a second hearing held later that same day at 6 pm at Boston City Hall Room 801.

The BHA took several steps to notify the public of the FY 2014 Annual Plan and the opportunity to comment. The BHA placed an advertisement in the Boston Globe and mailed out over 20,000 flyers to public housing residents and Section 8 participants notifying them of the Public Hearing and the proposed Plan. The BHA also sent letters to many local officials and advocacy groups. The Plan was made available for review at task force offices, BHA's headquarters at 52 Chauncy St., on its website www.bostonhousing.org as well as in the Government Documents section of the Copley Branch of the Boston Public Library.

Please Note: AP refers to Annual Plan, S refers to the Supplement to the Annual Plan, and PR refers to Progress

Report. Some page numbers may change in the final Plan submission.

Proposed Changes to Public Housing Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy and Leased Housing Administrative Plan:

Comment: These comments are offered by the Housing Search and Advocacy Program at AIDS Action Committee in response to the proposed changes to BHA's ACOP and Administrative Plan.

In the Housing Search and Advocacy program at AIDS Action Committee, we work with hundreds of clients living in the greater Boston area, many of whom reside in or have been displaced from Boston and are looking to remain or return to Boston as it is their home community, the location of their medical care, and the base of their broader support system. Almost all of our clients are disabled, very- or extremely low income individuals and families. All of our clients are unstably housed, and many meet the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness. We assist our clients in applying to a wide array of affordable housing options, including applying to Boston Housing Authority and accessing a priority status designation and preference points, whenever possible.

There are two particular changes that would reduce the significant barriers faced by families attempting to access the affordable, permanent housing they need: extending the definition of transitional housing assistance to include shelter diversion programs, and expanding the definition of disabled household to include families where any member, not only the head or co-head, is disabled. We are in agreement with the comments provided by Greater Boston Legal Services on these (and other) issues.

We ask that BHA amend the language used in both of its definitions of transitional housing assistance to include language that allows families accessing temporary shelter diversion programs to be identified as homeless and retain their priority status. Extending the definition of transitional housing assistance to include shelter diversion programs would allow more temporarily and unstably housed families to retain their priority status and continue on the path to permanent housing. Without the retention of this priority status while in the shelter diversion programs, families are suffering significant setbacks to their quest for permanent, affordable housing. Families enter temporary shelter diversion programs with the hope of safer, healthier housing. They are not able to stay in these programs of the

long term, a fact that is well known from the start. By not retaining their priority status throughout the duration of the diversion program, families are forced to trade their health in the short term for housing in the long term. We have worked with many families who have accessed diversion programs such as HomeBASE who have no other options and are now facing shelter placements again. The prospects for these and future families in similar situations could be vastly improved by acknowledging the temporary nature of shelter diversion programs and categorizing them as transitional housing. Allowing families in shelter diversion programs to qualify for priority based on homelessness is, we believe, in the spirit of the intention to prioritize families who lack stability in the form of a permanent residence and true home.

We also ask that BHA expand its points system in both the ACOP and Administrative Plan to grant points for disability to households where any member, not only the head or co-head of household, has a disability. This change would acknowledge the particular vulnerability and hardship for families where any person in the household has such a serious health condition. We work with many multigenerational households, some of whom are restricted

from accessing the disability points due to the language in the current definition. To extend the points system in this way would seem to be in the spirit of the intention to provide an expedited response to families where lack of stable housing has an especially detrimental impact on health.

Due to disability, low income, and the state of the rental market in the Boston area, almost all of our clients will always be in need of a housing subsidy or some form of rental assistance. Due to the length of the waiting lists for such assistance, our clients often remain homeless or unstably housed for many years. In that time, the lack of stability and the conditions of the housing or shelter in which these clients must live result in a negative impact on the health of people who already have a compromised immune system. It is clear that BHA gives strong consideration to prioritizing applicants who are most vulnerable and most in need of permanent, affordable housing. We appreciate this thoughtfulness and hope you agree that implementing more inclusive definitions of transitional housing assistance and disabled household would contribute to prioritizing those most vulnerable by decreasing the substantial barriers that already face vulnerable families in need of affordable housing.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these comments. We look forward to continuing to share ideas and work in cooperation to assist individuals and families in accessing the safe, permanent, affordable housing they need.

Response: Thank you for your feedback. The BHA has not proposed any changes to either the transitional housing or disabled definitions. The BHA will review your proposals and consider them for any future changes.

Comment: Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP) for BHA Public Housing

Most of the changes that BHA has proposed to its Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP) for public housing are non-controversial and should be adopted. This includes: (a) changing the language in Chapter 4 regarding the closing of the waiting lists; (b) adding language throughout that, as clarified in recent federal legislation, victims/survivors of sexual assault are entitled to the same protections as others covered by the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA); (c) making clear, in Chapter 9, that annual review of flat rents does not necessarily mean that flat rents will change each year; and (d) simplifying the process in Chapter 9 for approving

alternate means of verification. Moreover, while it is appropriate, in Chapter 3, to make clear that mailing of applications is not always required, and is permissive, it must be recognized that in some cases, mailing of applications would be required as a reasonable accommodation. This would be the case, for example, if an applicant cannot come to the BHA's office and cannot readily access electronic means of application.

Response: Thank you for your support. Yes, the BHA will always consider reasonable accommodation requests including and not limited to mailing applications.

Comment: Two of BHA's proposed changes require further comment and should be reconsidered. In addition, there are other additions that BHA should consider.

Veterans Preference: BHA has long had a veterans' preference in both its public housing and Section 8 programs. Last year, BHA modified the Section 8 veterans' preference in its Section 8 program to simplify the point system. We agree that where possible, there should be a simplified system: this eases administrative barriers for both veterans in need of housing and BHA staff. BHA has proposed similar changes in this year's ACOP,

but with some distinctions between how the preference operates for its state elderly/disabled public housing, where it believes DHCD rules require a different approach, and for its other public housing programs.

There are two problems, however, with BHA's approach, at least one of which should require a second look at the Section 8 preference as well:

Overly narrow definition of veterans preference for federal programs: BHA has chosen to use the state definition of "veteran" in defining who is eligible for the preference. See G.L. c. 4, sec. 7, clause 43. Unfortunately, this does not encompass veterans of recent military combat; the last war-related service covered is the Persian Gulf conflict of 1991. This means that those veterans who served their country honorably in Afghanistan and Iraq and are in need of housing are out of luck. Moreover, the definition is limited to veterans with some war-time service, and does not include those who served their country honorably in peacetime. While BHA has no choice but to use the state definition for its state public housing programs, it is not required to use this definition on the federal side, and it should not. Instead, it should use the federal definition of "veteran" at 38 U.S.C. 101(2), which includes those who've served in

more recent military conflicts. BHA should have a different definition of "veteran" for its federal and state programs. As provided by state law (G.L. c. 121B, sec. 1) and the existing ACOP and Administrative Plan, the term should also include, on the state and federal side, the spouse, surviving spouse, parent, or other dependent of a veteran and the divorced spouse of a veteran who is the legal guardian of a child of a veteran.

Need to retain ranking factors among veterans for state family public housing: On the state family public housing side, unfortunately BHA is not free to discard the ranking system that distinguishes between veterans who have a service-connected disability, the survivors of veterans who died in conflict, and other veterans. This is because these ranking factors are found in G.L. c. 121B, sec. 32. In BHA's state elderly/disabled public housing (which makes up only a small portion of the BHA's overall portfolio), G.L. c. 121B, sec. 39 does not mandate such distinctions between veterans, but it does limit the veterans preference to those who also qualify for local residency preference. BHA's proposal properly reflects the state statutory scheme for its Chapter 667 developments, but not for the Chapter 200 developments. Therefore, BHA must retain the special ranking factors for its

state family public housing system.

Response: Thank you for your feedback. The BHA will review and consider the proposed federal definition of “veteran” at 38 U.S.C. 101(2) and determine if such definition best meets the intended proposed change.

The BHA Administrative Plan for Section 8 Programs, does not make any reference to the definition cited above. Furthermore, the Administrative Plan likewise currently contains language referencing “the spouse, the surviving spouse, parent, or other dependent of a veteran and the divorced spouse of a veteran who is the legal guardian of a child of a veteran.” Please see Admin. Section 3.3.6(b).

Comment: Transitional Housing Assistance and Homeless Preference: Last year BHA proposed a change to both its ACOP and its Section 8 administrative plan to define what “transitional housing assistance” was in clarifying how its “homeless preference” operates. This change was adopted in the Section 8 administrative plan, and was approved by HUD for the federal program, but DHCD was unwilling to approve the ACOP change. In the meantime, the State Legislature revised the homeless definition for state public housing. BHA has

proposed this year to use different definitions of “transitional housing assistance” for its federal and state public housing programs: the state definition will follow the state statute or regulation, and the federal definition will follow what was approved last year.

The main concern of the State Legislature, in adopting the revised homeless definition, was to attempt to divert at risk families from going into or remaining in emergency shelter by using other resources like HomeBASE temporary rental assistance. Long-term HomeBASE rental assistance is no longer an option for new families who are not yet in the shelter system, and many families have lost their HomeBASE assistance and are in unaffordable housing situations where they are facing likely eviction and homelessness. However, there remain programs that encourage families to be placed out of shelter.

It is in both the Commonwealth’s and the City of Boston’s interest to minimize the number of families in shelter and the length of shelter stays. Just as BHA recognizes that there are good cause instances for temporary absence from shelter (for medical and other emergency family factors), BHA should continue the homeless preference for those who have

utilized these temporary measures but where it is clear that their long-term housing is not stable and affordable because they are in a City or State recognized temporary diversion program. We would therefore ask that language be added to the end of both of the “transitional housing assistance” definitions: “If a family was in a homeless shelter and is in a City or State recognized shelter diversion program, it shall continue to be eligible for homeless preference.” BHA can then work with the City and State partners to define which shelter diversion programs qualify.

BHA has legitimate concerns about swamping its Priority 1 list with additional numbers of applicants under an expanded category, particularly since it is at full occupancy, has very limited public housing units to offer each year, has frozen issuance of Section 8 vouchers (and may need to have emergency measures to address existing Section 8 families facing termination for insufficient funding), and has limited turnover available in its project-based Section 8 Project-Based Voucher and Moderate Rehabilitation developments. However, by granting a limited expansion of the homeless priority to those already in the shelter system who are diverted into temporary programs, and not purging such families from its lists, BHA is unlikely to

increase demand on a strained program. Instead, it will mean that more of the Priority 1 applicants already in the system in need of housing will not lose that priority just by virtue of being churned out of shelter into situations that are only temporarily stable.

BHA and the City of Boston also have legitimate concerns that other housing authorities and municipalities are not doing their fair share to address the Commonwealth-wide issue of homelessness and lack of affordable housing. Only a limited number of authorities have a homeless preference in their federal housing programs. Many multifamily assisted housing developments similarly do not grant a preference for homeless and at risk families. Mayor Menino championed legislation that would provide incentives for communities that did try to address this need, and such efforts need to continue to be pushed. DHCD can and should mandate homeless preferences for both state and federal public housing (DHCD is free to mandate preferences in federal housing in the absence of any federally mandated preferences); if there is a lack of political will or heft to accomplish this by mandate, then DHCD should also establish incentives. The New Lease initiative, which is exploring homeless preference for certain multifamily housing developments, should be

expanded after an initial pilot phase works out mechanics.

Response: Thank you for your feedback. The BHA has not proposed any changes to the already approved transitional housing definition. The BHA will review your proposal and consider them for any future changes.

Comment: Disability Related Points Should Not Be Limited to Cases Where the Head of Household or Spouse Is a Person with Disabilities: At a meeting of housing search workers at St. Francis House in mid-2013, Gloria Meneses noted that one thing BHA was considering was extending its point system for persons with disabilities to households in which there is another person with a disability other than the head of household or spouse. This makes sense and should be adopted for both the ACOP and for the Section 8 Administrative Plan. BHA's collaboration with the Health Baby, Healthy Child program shows the importance of rapid response to children's severe health needs. There may be other circumstances in which there is a seriously disabled adult in the household who is neither the head nor the spouse. It is appropriate to give such households expedited consideration where more rapid placement in housing would help to alleviate a deterioration in family health.

Response: Thank you for your feedback. The BHA has not proposed any changes to the disabled preference definition at this time. The BHA will review your proposal and take them into consideration for any future changes.

Comment: Take Advantage of HUD Streamlining Authority: HUD has authorized PHAs to alter the usual way in which they do recertifications and to simplify them somewhat. See PIH Notice 2013-3, as extended by PIH Notice 2013-26 through March 31, 2015. To do this, though, PHAs must specifically state that they are utilizing this streamlining authority in their PHA Plan and ACOP. We would recommend that BHA take advantage of this to reduce administrative burdens for both its staff and residents.

Response: Thank you for your comment. BHA public housing has no present plans to institute the changes outlined in PIH Notice 2013-3. The BHA's Leased Housing Division has adopted part of the suggestions in the above noted PIH notice. See Admin. Plan Section 8.5. This amendment was made as part of the last round of changes to the Administrative Plan.

Comment: Administrative Plan for BHA's Section 8 Programs

In October, 2013, staff from the BHA's Leased Housing Program did a presentation to the RAB where they indicated that six changes were being considered to the Administrative Plan. When the proposed FY 2014 PHA Plan was issued in late October, 2013, however, it only had two changes: (a) a revision to Section 3.1.1, to provide, like the ACOP, that application forms "may be available by mail" (instead of "shall be available by mail"); and (b) revision to language about Special Purpose Vouchers in Section 3.3.8, providing that applicants who qualify for such vouchers may be reached before other applicants if the BHA has not assisted the required numbers of special purpose voucher families. Both of these changes (with the proviso mentioned above under the ACOP that in some cases reasonable accommodation would require mailing applications to a disabled family) are fine. However, there is a concern about whether other changes may be made to the Administrative Plan without some kind of notice and opportunity for comment by participants, applicants, and the public.

Barbara Sheerin of BHA's Leased Housing staff was asked why the proposed Administrative Plan had fewer suggested changes than what the RAB had been told in October, She indicated that

some of the changes were considered to not be "substantial amendments" to the Administrative Plan. An example was the proposal to reduce the amount of time subsidy is paid to participants who are terminated from the program for cause. Currently, if a participant is given a notice of proposed termination and does not request a hearing within 20 days, or if a participant loses a termination hearing, the participant and the owner are given a full month's advance notice of the effective date of subsidy termination. This is not required by federal law; BHA indicated it was revising the Plan as a cost-savings measure to end subsidy immediately after the appeal period lapsed or an adverse hearing decision issued. Other changes that had been flagged at the October, 2013 meeting which were not in what was distributed to the RAB and the public were:

- A requirement that requests for relief due to domestic violence be in writing;
- Elimination of language on co-heads of household from Residual Tenancy;
- Elimination of certain language on drug-related criminal activity (the language referred to applicants, but was in a section of the Administrative Plan that concerned participants).

It is not clear whether BHA is dropping these other proposals or still pursuing them. As was discussed at the October, 2013 RAB meeting, on the Residual Tenancy issue, there is good reason to retain the "co-head" language, since this distinguishes between cases where BHA must continue to provide assistance to the family and when it may cease to provide such assistance, and there is some history to the provision that should be discussed. On the Domestic Violence issue, while it is desirable that requests for relief be in writing, if an applicant or participant is unable to read and write, it should be possible to record the request with assistance, and staff should make clear that such tenants will not be denied help simply due to illiteracy. Because there may always be nuances on even minor issues like this which are worth discussion, BHA should afford Section 8 participants and the public an opportunity to comment on any Administrative Plan changes, even if it thinks that they are not mandatory subjects of the PHA Plan. This is consistent with the approach BHA has taken about resident participation generally in its public housing program under its Tenant Participation Policy, and Section 8 participants should be treated with the same courtesy and respect.

Response: Thank you for your comment. Leased Housing makes changes to the Admin. Plan where changes are not considered significant as needed. Leased Housing made changes to the VAWA section in accordance with the Statute. The notice referenced is not a requirement that Participants inform Leased Housing in writing. The requirement in accordance with the statute is that Leased Housing make its request in writing.

Comment: Some additional revisions should be made to the Administrative Plan:

As was discussed at the October, 2013 RAB meeting, Leased Housing should make the same change to the Administrative Plan that Occupancy did to the ACOP to match the 2013 statutory revisions to VAWA—i.e., to accord protections to survivors/victims of sexual assault.

Response: Leased Housing will make necessary changes.

Comment: As noted in the ACOP comments above, the definition of Veteran in the Administrative Plan should be the federal definition, not the state definition, so that it includes those who served in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as to non-wartime service and is not limited to those whose service dates back to the

Persian Gulf conflict or earlier wars.

Response: LH has already made such changes.

Comment: As noted in the ACOP comments above, the term “transitional housing assistance” should be clarified so that if a family was in a homeless shelter and has been placed in a City or State recognized shelter diversion program, it does not lose Priority 1 status.

Response: Thank you for your comments.

Comment: As noted in the ACOP comments, it would make sense to accord any extra points to recognize the special needs of those with disabilities for expedited placement not just to households where the head or spouse is a person with disabilities, but where any household member is disabled.

Response: Thank you for your comments.

Comment: As noted in our comments on the mid-year amendment to the Administrative Plan, HUD has given PHAs authority to take certain “streamlining” measures to simplify administration and reduce costs. See PIH Notice 2013-3, as extended through March 31, 2015 by PIH Notice 2013-26. One of these measures permits PHAs to

themselves approve payment standards of up to 120% of FMR where needed as a reasonable accommodation without having to seek HUD field office approval. As noted above under the ACOP comments, it also permits more flexibility in how recertifications are conducted for both public housing and Section 8. We recommend that BHA take advantage of this streamlining authority, but this requires that BHA include this in its PHA Plan and Administrative Plan.

Response: Thank you for your comments. Leased Housing adopted the first suggestion (See Admin. Plan Section 8.5), and considered adopting the latter provision but decided against as practically speaking the options afforded do not streamline the process.

Comment: On the date of submission of these comments to BHA, GBLS discovered that in September, 2013, BHA’s Leased Housing Division had changed the methodology which it used for calculating rent from earned income to be the higher of the average of the four most recent paystubs or the average of the year to date earnings. While this is permissible under the Temporary Compliance Assistance notice, again, BHA had not yet indicated that it was using such authority in its Administrative Plan. Moreover, as is provided in PIH Notice

2013-03, if a participant disputes the amount or thinks changed circumstance and more recent data would result in a lower rent, the PHA must use, at the participant's request, the more recent income information verified by the participant, provided third party documentation or verification reflects the new or current work circumstance.

Response: Thank you for your comments. The above notice makes a distinction with regard to income reported in comparison to income as shown via EIV. The BHA does not calculate income based upon what is reported via EIV. The BHA is calculating income based on the four most recent paystubs using either an average of the current gross pay or year to date earnings, whichever is higher. As always participants are free to dispute the rent calculation and are afforded appeal rights with regard to rent calculation.

Comment: An issue that arose both in the community meetings on the Section 8 subsidy cuts at Roxbury Community College (attended by over 400 tenants) as well as the public hearings on the PHA Plan on December 9 (attended by close to 200 participants between the day-time and evening sessions) is, if the BHA has to go through terminations of participants for insufficient funding, how does it decide who will lose

assistance? The current Administrative Plan, developed a number of years ago at a time when the likelihood of termination was remote, provides that those who've been on the Section 8 program the longest would be the first to be terminated, and includes an exception for elderly and disabled families. BHA has indicated that if terminations became necessary, this should be re-examined. BHA should give as much lead time as possible for thoughtful public comment on this issue, and any alternatives to termination (as discussed above).

There is a further question about how BHA should make decisions if funding improves. There are a number of different tensions here. Existing participants who relocated have already had their subsidy standard reduced to 100% of Fair Market Rent, and similar reductions in the payment standard are due to be phased in during the next year as participants come to the 2nd annual recertification after the payment standard was reduced in the spring of 2013. This could result in participants having steep rent burdens and unaffordable rents, and possible displacement due to nonpayment of rent. On the other hand, a number of families were issued vouchers after April 1st which were then rescinded, and there are many others on waiting lists. Project-

Based Voucher participants who've been in occupancy for over a year have been wait-listed for mobile vouchers, and if they relocate, there will be numerous vacancies within the PBV portfolio. In some cases, BHA has terminated assistance for cause but in the past would have exercised discretion to reinstate assistance on appropriate terms and conditions; this has not generally been possible due to the fiscal situation. BHA staff may say, given how bad the situation has been, and the fact that 500 families have been at risk of loss of subsidy due to insufficient funding, it would be lucky to have such problems. But there is always a dilemma of how to marshal pent-up demand—particularly where it is not clear what the funding will be, or how dependable or long-term the solution is. BHA should continue to engage with its community partners, the City of Boston, and its residents over these issues in the coming months, even if the immediate crisis can be averted.

Response: Thank you, the BHA will give very careful consideration to your comments.

Comment: I'm not going to talk about all the things that I normally talk about at public hearings. I will mention two short ones which aren't about the budget cuts. One is about fixing your veteran's definition in

your ACOP – in your administrative plan. Right now, it actually will not give preference to persons of the Afghanistan or Iraq war; it ends at Persian Gulf. As long as you've been doing it, you've actually been using the state definition; that's the problem in the ACOP and the admin plan. It needs to be fixed. The simplification, [inaudible] on state time, might be a little tricky because of some state issues, and I'll give you more detail and comments on that later.

The second thing is on homelessness issues. You have a provision for transitional housing priority on the state side, and a slightly different definition on the federal side. I know there's been some controversy put forth about that issue. One thing I would recommend is if the state or the city come up with a shelter diversion program, so that if people were in shelter and then the state or city had a recognized diversion program, you continue to grant Priority 1 status for people that are in those divergent programs because, right now, there's been a whole discussion with the city and the state about how many people are in shelter and how long they're in shelter. One of the problems is that people wait a long time in waiting lists to get to the top of the list, and if something happens to them – if they're in one of these other things – they just lose out on all that time that

they've been waiting. It may be that they've only been a month out of being in shelter, but it's as if they had no status at all on the waiting list. Obviously, this is something we'll work with city and state about what might actually work, in terms of what really needs a definition, but it's something to think about when you're collaborating with the city and the state.

Response: Thank you for your feedback. 1) The BHA will review and consider the proposed federal definition of "veteran" at 38 U.S.C. 101(2) and determine if such definition best meets the intended proposed change. 2) The BHA has not proposed any changes to the already approved transitional housing definition. The BHA will review your proposal and take it into consideration for any future changes.

Administration:

Comment: I am sorry for this being late? I am for the federal govt. to continue the necessary funding to all BHA Sect. 8 and Public housing families etc. what will happen to those who may be cut off from Vouchers in 2014? Sad if this were to happen.

Response: The Authority will make every effort to avoid Sect. 8 subsidy/voucher terminations including the use of other legally available funds whose use will in part be governed by HUD PIH Notice 2013-28 that requires HUD approve such expenditures. Due to the many cost saving measure instituted by the Authority during 2013, and with the enactment of the Bipartisan Budget Act, the BHA is hopeful that no voucher terminations due to lack of funds will take place in 2014.

Comment: Reduced Federal Funding and Impact on BHA's Section 8 and Public Housing Programs

Since the spring of 2013, BHA has faced an unprecedented crisis due to underfunding of its Section 8 and public housing programs, and this crisis shows no sign of abating. Moreover, due to decisions made in prior funding rounds, as well as the severity and retrospective effects of the spring 2013 reductions, BHA has spent down most if not all of its public housing and Section 8 reserves, leaving it with few to no "rainy day" options. Public housing operating subsidy is now pro-rated at 82% --the lowest level in BHA's history. Section 8 subsidy was cut by 7%, and administrative fees were reduced to an even greater extent.

Last summer, following a mid-year amendment to the PHA Plan and Administrative Plan, BHA implemented a number of sweeping cost-savings measures. It reduced the payment standard from 105-110% of the HUD published Fair Market Rents (FMRs) to 100%. It revised subsidy standards and set strict limits on when families could qualify for larger subsidies based on the number of bedrooms. It revised utility allowances. It required Section 8 participants to report increases in income of \$200/month or more. It obtained authorization to implement minimum rents. (BHA has so far held off on actual implementation, as it is not clear that this will result in a significant savings and by definition this change would focus on the poorest of the poor). BHA also froze issuance of any vouchers (including any mobility vouchers for participants in the Project-Based Voucher (PBV) program who could normally relocate after the first year of their tenancy) and had to rescind vouchers that had already been issued after April 1. BHA has also gotten much tougher on Section 8 terminations. The number of participants terminated for program violations has increased substantially; while in the past BHA might be willing to enter into settlements that would allow reinstatement on appropriate terms and

conditions in many of these cases, BHA has not been willing to exercise its discretion in the same way in light of its fiscal circumstances.

BHA wished to go further with cost savings to reduce its costs to a level so that it felt it could live within its Section 8 budget, but HUD did not grant approval for waivers. Instead, HUD granted BHA and a number of other PHAs “shortfall” funding to try to help manage the Section 8 crisis. See PIH Notice 2013-12. The cost savings measures and the shortfall funding have avoided catastrophe so far. But there is no light at the end of the tunnel, and BHA currently projects that unless anticipated federal funding increases, it will not have sufficient funds to cover all Section 8 assisted tenancies as of the spring of 2014 and will have to terminate participants’ subsidy contracts due to insufficient funding. BHA estimated in the fall of 2013 that 500 families would have to be terminated in order for it to operate within balance.

From very recent information we received from BHA, it appears that HUD is rescinding \$350,000 in shortfall funding that it granted to BHA. HUD should not penalize BHA for steps that it has taken to ensure that it did not have to terminate families by the end of 2013. Shortfall funding is still desperately needed. BHA has counted on HUD’s money to

help avoid terminations. Over 400 families came to speak out about the terrible effects that termination due to insufficient funding will have for them. Many of these families related how they had been homeless for prolonged periods, and would give up hope if they had to return to that cycle. Many have disabilities, young children, and cyclical illnesses that make it impossible for them to find long-term work.

Congressional gridlock does not engender hope that the Section 8 and public housing funding crises will be alleviated anytime soon. BHA and the City of Boston, working with the Commonwealth and other PHAs, need to develop a safety net to protect Section 8 families from becoming homeless due to no fault of their own. A request has been made to the City for a line-item for housing to help address this crisis. It may be that other funding could be used to encourage Section 8 owners to reduce contract rents or, if evictions occur due to reduced subsidies or actual termination, to help cover the gap in rents until families can successfully relocate. Partnership with housing search and homeless prevention agencies, as well as clear communication to the Courts will be critical. And it is vital for BHA and the City to preserve the confidence that the community has in the Section 8 program—hard-won over the

years—and its role in building and preserving stable communities.

While Section 8 is the most apparent crisis, since subsidy cuts translate into large numbers of families immediately facing homelessness, the public housing cuts are even steeper, and over the long run may be more devastating. BHA and local, state, and federal decision-makers had to go a long way to build BHA's public housing program back up from the desperate days in the 1970's when the BHA spun into receivership with hundreds of boarded up units. That story seemed long behind us—but chronic underfunding certainly can bring it back. If there is insufficient staffing to maintain, manage, and keep developments safe, things can quickly spin out of control. The staff of the BHA is to be commended for weathering the current crisis but they cannot do it alone. Residents are willing to stand with them, but the community must get the message out that public housing is a vital investment for Boston's present and its future. For this reason, we strongly support the request of the BHA Resident Advisory Board (RAB) and the Save Our Section 8 Coalition that there be at least 100% funding of the BHA's Section 8 budget (HAP and Administrative Fees) and Public Housing Operating Subsidy.

Response: The Authority fully supports the commenter's position that there be 100% funding of the BHA's Section 8 budget (HAP and Administrative Fees) and Public Housing Operating Subsidy. The recently enacted Bipartisan Budget Act may provide partial restoration of subsidies. There are no details at this time for where the sequester relief funds will be distributed in the non-defense discretionary programs.

The Authority agrees with the commentor that all its housing programs are affected by the federal budget cuts. However, current levels are leading to an unsustainable use of reserves in Section 8 HAP and Administrative Fees as well as Public Housing.

With respect to the commenter objecting to the rescinding of \$351,405, we concur. These funds could have been used to offset in a small way the millions in Section 8 reserves and administrative reserves that have been depleted in this calendar year.

Comment: Governance and New Leadership for the City of Boston

In 2013, BHA and the City of Boston were successful in getting revised governance legislation adopted. See St. 2013, c. 139 (signed by the

Governor on November 20, 2013). The revision cures two problems: (a) it ensures that the Monitoring Committee does not discontinue in its operations at the end of each City Council term; and (b) it guarantees that at least one BHA Section 8 participant is a member of the Monitoring Committee. For the past two years, however, no Monitoring Committee members have been appointed and the Committee did not meet at all. This is not acceptable. It will be critical for newly elected Mayor Walsh and the Administrator to remedy this early in 2014, particularly if any new proposals for public housing redevelopment (such as the Choice Neighborhoods proposal for Whittier Street) are to go forward. BHA has started the process by asking resident groups to consider qualified applicants for the public housing and Section 8 seats and by asking community advocates to suggest other names for the non-resident positions.

It also remains critical for there to be good communication among Monitoring Committee members, RAB members, and local tenant organizations (LTOs) for those in public and "mixed finance" housing and with BHA-administered Section 8 subsidies. As is provided for in the BHA's Tenant Participation Policy (TPP), LTOs and the RAB should be (1) informed of the names and

contact information for the Monitoring Committee members, (2) notified when and where the Committee will meet, and (3) provided with copies of its minutes and annual report. Similarly, Monitoring Committee members should get contact information for the RAB and LTO-elected Board members, regular meeting times, and (to the extent they exist) minutes in case they, too, would like to know what is happening or wish to attend other resident meetings.

Mayor-Elect Walsh is the first new Mayor in Boston in 20 years. Mayor Menino has provided incredible leadership and support in the area of affordable housing in general and for BHA's public housing and Section 8 programs in particular. Current Administrator Bill McGonagle and past Administrator Sandra Henriquez had a great relationship both with the Mayor and with the Mayor's larger Housing Cabinet. City policies on preservation and development of affordable housing, on preventing and alleviating homelessness, and on self-sufficiency initiatives for residents were all fostered out of these positive partnerships. There is a good positive history to be built upon as the new Mayor and the City Council (consisting of old and new leadership) face the challenges of the coming years. The Mayor is the lynch-pin for the

success of the BHA. As was shown by the "hands-off" attitude of the White Administration, neglect can lead to chaos. As was shown by the early days of the Menino administration, prior to the appointment of Sandra Henriquez as Administrator, it is also critical that there be a good rapport and trust between City and BHA leadership. Our office and various resident and advocacy organizations look forward to building on BHA's and the City's positive legacy for the future.

Response: The BHA revised governance legislation was adopted on November 20, 2013. The BHA fully agrees with the points made in the provided comment and is in the process of preparing a list of names to present to Mayor Walsh for appointment of a new Monitoring Committee. All meetings will be publicly posted and minutes kept of committee business.

Comment: S pp. 20-21: PHA Management Structure. This is one of the best and most useful charts in the PHA Plan, and it should be made broadly available (and ultimately should be accessible on the website). While there may be changes in this chart over the course of the year, it is helpful in showing how the BHA is organized and who oversees what. One question that residents have asked is why the Deputy

Administrator position is not immediately below the Administrator's level and over all divisions, but is only responsible for certain divisions (this is not to say that this is what is desired, but is a natural question deriving from use of the term "Deputy Administrator").

Response: The Deputy Administrator (DA) continues to maintain line authority for the departments listed below the position on chart. The BHA feels the current location for the DA on the organizational chart is the appropriate placement.

The Authority will look to placing an organizational chart on its new website when implemented in 2014.

Comment: PR p. 25: The discussion here about attracting, motivating, retaining, managing, and developing qualified and productive employees and providing a non-discriminatory workplace seems to be missing some discussion about current fiscal realities, layoffs, and hiring freezes, and likely needs revision.

Response: The Authority's comment remains an accurate reflection of the current environment. While the funding situation has deteriorated over the past year to the point where layoffs were required, the few positions that are vacated are due primarily to retiring staff. The small number of positions

that are backfilled to maintain critical functions still attract large numbers of good candidates and the Authority remains an attractive place to work.

Comment: I've been disabled since 2011. I've been on the streets since I was 13. I'm 42 years old now. I came to Boston, Massachusetts for help. I've been on the street for a long time. I got tired of sleeping in abandoned buildings, watching mice run over me, so I'd get bricks and crates so I could get up as high as I can. I've seen people die in those warehouses. But these last four years have been the best years of my life. All I wanted to do was be housed. When I got housed, I decided to get baptized, join the church. Number one: Stop drinking and drugging. I have eight years clean. That's the longest I've ever been clean, because I was housed.

I'm from New Jersey. The one thing I know about Boston is that they care. I lived at Pine Street Inn for two years – two years. One thing about Pine Street Inn: They offered me counseling. I've seen doctors at Pine Street save people's lives that were dying. I was dying. I felt like, and I still feel like, I don't want to be here on this planet if I have to go back to hell. Get me? But you know what? As long as there's a god up there that's watching over

every last one of us, I believe, truly, that this that's about to happen, that they're trying to have happen, and if it happens, the world will never be the same. America will never be the same if this happens.

I've been shot, stabbed, beaten, punched, kicked, everything in the streets; they tried to kill me. I didn't want to die. I want to live, but I'm saying that this program, I hope and I pray... I couldn't sleep for the last three or four days when I got this paper. I wanted to know if I'm going to have a warm bed to go to and a refrigerator to go eat something out of. I ate out of garbage cans plenty of nights. I don't want to do that no more. I don't want to catch no disease. I'm talking for me and everybody that's in my situation. We need help from the government. The world is already crazy. We need this thing to pass in order to survive. We are survivors. We're still here. We ain't gone yet. Don't throw us away like trash. We're human beings. It's not about me. It's about the kids. The kids don't need to go through what we went through. God forbid, I would not want that to happen.

The last thing I want to say is please, Mr. Government, please, Mr. President, help us. Help us. We need this in order to survive. Thank you.

Response: BHA staff commends the many public housing residents, voucher participants and applicants that shared their personal stories and struggles as part of this hearing. Your experiences, both through your educational/career successes and contributions to your communities, as well as through some difficult times with illness, homelessness, domestic violence and disability, remind all of us of how crucial it is to have an affordable, stable place to live, why we do the work we do, and that any of us under certain unfortunate life circumstances can find ourselves in need of some help. Thank you for your thoughtful comments that make clear the critical importance of stable and permanent housing.

Comment: I want to thank the previous speaker for reminding us why we're all here. Our organization organizes tenants in privately-owned HUD housing. We're a sister organization to groups that work like [inaudible] and [inaudible] Boston Public Housing; we work in privately-owned developments. We've helped save about 11,500 apartments, one building at a time, through tenant organizing, since 1983 – the last 30 years. A lot of our members, however, get vouchers, through the BHA or through other agencies and they are hit by these cuts that nobody's talked about yet today.

The BHA has been hit hard by the budget cuts in Washington, called the sequester – there was a six percent in the spring – and not just them, but every single agency in the country. What they've pretty much all done is they've frozen the turnovers so people like Dwayne, who are in the shelters or on the streets, cannot get housing; they're going to have to wait a little longer. If they're in a shelter too long, a lot of them, like the Veteran's shelter, will kick you out after two years. This is a real thing. There are already thousands of people homeless on the streets even before these cuts; this has made it much worse.

The Globe had a front page story: "Big spike in homeless families in Boston." Well, this is why. It's because of the Federal Government's budget cuts. They came from Congress, the Budget Control Act, driven by the Republicans whose whole solution to their supposed deficit is cuts only, no tax increases on the rich. There's plenty of money in the system; they're just not taking it. Bush cut taxes to the rich. They've gotten rich over the last 10 years, 15 years. Inequality has never been as great as it is now and we have to turn that around. So, the long-term answer is we have to raise taxes on the rich, big corporations that aren't paying their fair share, cut

military spending, invest in jobs, and no more cuts to housing, social security, or anything else. We came to that conclusion because we've been fighting budget cuts to housing for a decade pretty successfully with an alliance with public housing and other groups, but two years ago we realized we had to go broader so we joined a larger coalition with labor and peace groups called the Budget for All Coalition. We got that referendum that many of you, I'm sure, voted for – it was on the ballot last year – that says "No cuts; tax the rich." It passed three to one. That's the message that we all need to be taking to Washington.

For this hearing today, there are some specific recommendations. We should do everything we can to support the BHA; they're doing the best they can, but they're going to have to cut 500 people and throw them out on the street in the spring if these budget cuts are not reversed very soon in Washington. They're just going to run out of reserves. They've done a great job fighting it as hard as they can, putting it off, but it will happen unless some money comes from Washington. So, we're all watching what's going on. When they shut the government down, it reopened for three months, so watch what happens. They're supposed to come up with a deal this week. If they don't come up with that

deal, if there's not enough money, then the first line of defense is we all have to go to HUD and say, "If you have discretion, if Congress gives you the ability to shift money among line items, don't cut, rather, restore the money to vouchers and public housing and operating. Don't cut rental housing; cut the block grants like CDBG and other programs. They're good programs, but if you've got to cut something, keep the rental housing funded; cut the other programs." So that's the first thing. The BHA, in their plan, could say that and could say it publically as well.

The second thing is, if that doesn't work, it's prudent for us to try to come up with an answer here in Boston. So, a coalition of groups proposed a line item in the city budget. Mayor Walsh committed to that on November 1st, so that if Washington doesn't come through, he's pledged to introduce a line item of half of a percent or so, which would be \$13 million out of the \$2.6 billion housing budget for Boston, and that would be enough to stop these customer vouchers. If the money gets restored, it would be a fund that could be used for public housing and new, low-income housing. \$13 million a year would go a long way toward meeting the housing needs. The Mayor said he's got to have a line item for the arts – that's a good thing – but we need a line

item for housing. There isn't one in the city budget. There are a couple cities that have done it, but Boston can take the lead.

So, we all need to show up. There will be a hearing that the Mayor will hold for the housing transition. We need to show up and say this at that hearing to support this pledge and urge him to make that happen. We also need to work now to do some research. According to Mac McCreight, we need to pin down the legalities of this and maybe get some waivers or regulations out of HUD to make sure that we could do this. That could take months. That needs to be started now in case we need to do this.

Another thing: the BHA plan says they now have permission to raise the minimum rents of the poorest tenants to \$50. They have very wisely concluded that they don't want to do that and we encouraged them to not do that. Not only is it the poorest of the poor here, but it would be counterproductive; it would probably cost more money to evict people and then aggravate homelessness than it would save them. So, they very wisely have said they're not going to do that and we very strongly support that position. The last thing we could do to prepare – let's say none of this works and they have to cut later in the spring – we could go after

the large, corporate landlords and say they need to eat this cut in payment standards, not the tenants. That can be negotiated with the larger companies. There aren't that many of them. What the BHA could do to help with that is to actually identify for the organizing groups – I know City Life had raised this at the meeting last week – but we could use the information of "Who are the landlords?" and "How many units do they have from the BHA?" so we could start planning the necessary organizing campaigns now and not be stuck in a crisis mode three months from now. We've joined forces with the other groups in public housing and the Section 8 Coalition. We've been asked to coordinate the committee. There are three committees. They signed up people on Wednesday and Thursday of last week. One of the committees is around the city line item budget and we have petitions; if you haven't signed for that yet, you can do that today. There are other committees on organizing neighborhood meetings, and a postcard campaign to Washington. So, please sign up for those committees, get involved. Thanks for the opportunity to testify and we'll work with the BHA to fight these cuts in every way we can.

Response: Thank you, for your thoughtful comments, and thank

you for your advocacy over the years – yours and your organization's advocacy efforts – throughout greater Boston. By all means, we can provide that information to them... Please, can you follow up to make sure that he and his group get the information on who the landlords are? I think that that's a very good strategy and the sooner we get planning that, the better.

Comment: Hi, good morning. My name is Concetta Paul. I'm a public housing tenant. [Inaudible phrase], but I just have to read mine. My message to HUD is this: In light of the possible cuts to Section 8 funding, and alternately to public housing as well, a group of Section 8 tenants, including public housing tenants like myself and Section 8 tenants, we came together to form a coalition which is called the "Save Our Section 8 Coalition." Many members of the coalition are here today; [inaudible phrase] introduce them. Mister Kane from the Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants. We have advocates like Mac McCreight from Greater Boston Legal Services, Steve Meacham from City Life, Edna Willrich who spoke earlier from Section 8 Tenants, Incorporated. We also have Mae, who Mr. McGonagle just introduced, from the Committee for Boston Public Housing, members from the Resident Advisory Board of the BHA – the RAB – and also the

REC – the Resident Empowerment Coalition also a BHA group of tenants linked to BHA housing.

My message to HUD is this: that we request full funding for HUD rental housing programs for Section 8 and for public housing [applause interruption]. And if Congress does not restore full funding, what gives HUD the discretion to make line item adjustments, we will be very happy and we urge you all to prioritize rental housing over capital grant programs. Thank you.

Response: Thank you for your thoughtful comments that make clear the critical importance of stable and permanent housing.

Comment: Finally, on the budget cuts, we had, estimated, about 400 families show up for two public hearings last week that the Save Our Section 8 Coalition talked about, and that was a great turnout for people. I know that people were very upset. People were very angry. There was concern at the meeting, as Concetta said, about, “Oh, you meant I could get a letter from BHA that tells me 30 days from now my Section 8 is history and I’ve done nothing wrong? It’s just because there’s not enough money?” And yes, that is, in fact, what could happen, if these budget cuts are not restored and there is not the full, 100 percent funding that’s

needed. On the public housing side, BHA already had to go through a whole slew of staff reductions that, if it continues, they will have to look at issues of maintenance and management and public safety that, really, will make it very, very difficult to sustain the communities that BHA has been rebuilding since the late 1970s, and put at risk all that progress that has happened for all this time.

One message for HUD is, they had said to BHA, “We’re going to help you with some shortfall funding,” and they came up with \$350,000 to try to do some shortfall funding, and now they’re taking it back. That’s a message that people need to spread through Capuano’s office, through Mayor Walsh’s office, through Mayor Menino’s office, that that is not acceptable. BHA needs that money to not throw people off the program. It is going to be bad enough, and is bad enough, that people are going to be facing major rent increases next year on their Section 8 tenancies because the subsidy standards have reduced from 105 or 110 percent to 100 percent, which means real rent hikes that most Section 8 families are going to be facing because their landlords charge them more than 100 percent of the subsidy levels. So, in this time, the message really has to be: You need to work with us. You need

to stand with us. Residents and the BHA are willing to stand together, but this money is needed; 100 percent funding is needed. Thank you.

Response: Thank you for your thoughtful comments that make clear the critical importance of stable and permanent housing.

Comment: I thank god that we are all out here together. I go to church and I hear it all the time; [inaudible phrase] accord. If this ain’t an accord, then I don’t know what is. I thank god that we are all here together, fighting for what’s right, because we all need the housing and we need the help. If we were able to pay big portions of our rent, we wouldn’t need Section 8 help or the public housing. Those that are on disability or those that have kids, we are all in this together. It affects us all; not just some, but it affects us all. For us to come out here to fight for what’s right, I pray for everyone and I believe in the power of prayer and there is a god. So, we need to lean and depend on him and get together and fight for what’s right to keep it to go up to 100 percent and not decrease because of what happened on them, it’s putting a big toll on what’s happening to us. Let’s keep on fighting for what’s right, and I pray that a change will come immediately and effectively.

Response: Thank you for your thoughtful comments that make clear the critical importance of stable and permanent housing.

Comment: I wish I was more prepared. If I had known, today I would have spent a few hours in the library because I'm looking at some of this other stuff... I'd like to know how they're going to choose the 500 families. Being a younger person, I have so many emotions right now I don't know which way to go.

I think the market rate is incorrect; that should be adjusted anyway. That would solve part of the problem. The \$50 per month minimum rent is total b.s. because that should only be applied to the people that can really afford it. Obviously, some people have a little more income than others – disposable – and I'm not talking about a lot of money, but you know what I mean; \$40 a month, for some people, it hurts a little bit. I think it should be adjusted according to a person's situation. It should be based on, first you start out with the oldest people that are the most disabled, and then you go to the single mothers with the kids, and you go down the line of people that are really disabled. It should be a stair step system. It should not be a blanket application; that's bullshit – sorry. You can't solve the problem that way because

everybody is in a different situation. I could go on for an hour. You don't want to get me going. [Inaudible phrase] to see some of this stuff, and I'm glad to see that there's this many people here today. I'm not clear on the privately-owned properties and then the BHA-owned properties, so if someone could answer that question at the end. I know that, basically, you've got to ask a question to get an answer at some point, but I wasn't really clear on that, so if someone could explain that at the end – just the difference between those two?

I'm so [inaudible] to want to say anything, but I really feel bad for older people, disabled veterans, and single moms with kids. I could live in the street. I've done it. I can handle it, but some people, they cannot handle it, no freaking way.

Response: Just let me repeat something that Michael Kane said. We absolutely have no intention of implementing minimum rent. I think I've said that a few times, but I'll say it right here in front of all kinds of people, all kinds of witnesses: most importantly, it burdens the poorest of our poor; I'm on record saying that in the newspaper. In addition, it doesn't make sense, from a cost-effective standpoint. It would cost more money to implement that than we would save. The primary reason is

because, clearly, they are the poorest of the poor. As Michael said, \$40 or \$50 per month for folks that are struggling to feed themselves, and their families, it is a lot of money and I have no intention of imposing that additional burden on folks.

Again, in terms of who would be let go from the program, we first of all said that it's certainly my hope and intention to not have to terminate anybody from the program, but it would be irresponsible of me not to raise the possibility of that, given the cuts that have taken place already down in Washington. For me to keep that a secret would be highly irresponsible. As I have said to my staff, repeatedly, and as I had said publically and privately, before I terminate one person from the Section 8 program, we will spend every single penny of the Section 8 reserve, every single penny of any other unrestricted asset or money that the BHA has. Having said that, Michael did touch upon, it does appear, based on the Washington Post today, that there will be a budget deal, if you believe the Washington Post, before the end of the week. What's in that deal? I don't know. We've made some inquiries to the Council of Large Public Housing Authorities which is a public housing lobbying group down in Washington to see if we could get a hint as to what is in that deal. Minimally, I hope that by

the end of this week we'll know what's in that deal and we will be able to predict, with some greater certainty, what will happen. One of the things that I did notice from questions in the public hearing was that folks are appropriately asking very specific questions about their specific circumstances. Regrettably, given the fact that we've got a moving target here and we don't know what HUD will do or won't do, it's impossible for me to guarantee an answer because I don't know what I'm going to be faced with, in terms of a budget. Again, hopefully by the end of this week, we will minimally have a clearer picture as to what we are facing so that, at least, to some degree, I think the guessing game will be over.

Michael asked a question about if we had to terminate, who we would pull from the program. Our current plan calls for – and we adopted this years ago; quite frankly, I didn't pay much attention to it because I never ever, in my heart of hearts, believed that we would ever be faced with the circumstance where we would have to actually let people go from the program – folks that have been on the program the longest, with an exception for the elderly and disabled. Now, we're looking at a couple of different ways. Again, worst-case, last-case scenarios, and I, quite frankly, do not believe that we're ever going to be faced

with the situation where we have to let people go. I think, in an exercise like this, we've got to prepare for the worst and hope for the best; pray for the best, as was said appropriately today. We will follow through all the notions, I think, if we need to. At the end of this week, we may have a better sense as to how 2014 and perhaps 2015 is going. Worst-case scenario, the cuts are upheld, I will send out a public comment for a variety of options that we're looking at in the unlikely prospect that we have to terminate folks from the program. All of these scenarios exclude, I should say, elderly households and disabled households. One of the other ways that we looked at was a lottery program, but I don't want to go too much into that.

Comment: This is a tough issue that we are covering here because we are all in this, and even [inaudible phrase], we are all affected. Before I got Section 8, I was a single mother. Twice I found myself in the shelter because of domestic violence. I was working, but the shelter that was [in] forbid me – I couldn't go to work because it was a special program. That happens in this life. Sometimes you are a victim and [inaudible phrase] and they affect us greatly. I was in the shelter and I had to move all my stuff into storage. I had to pay them even though the shelter was free. In that shelter, I learned to

pray to god to give me a place to dwell with my child. In the shelter, the hygiene is terrible. In the [inaudible phrase]. All the women, we peed in a bucket and [inaudible] in the bathtub. If you want to take a bath, you've got to pour it all over your body. It's terrible.

Even the birds need their own nest. Whether we are poor, we need a roof for ourselves and we really implore the government to help us, because we all need the government like sheep need a shepherd. We need the government to help us. [Inaudible phrase.] Leave me in the street with my child? I prefer to die because if we don't have any place to wash, we don't have no [inaudible]. This is a prayer for the government, Obama, to help us. We really need this help.

Before, when I was working, I was making close to \$2,000 a month, but I gave all my money away. I will be with almost nothing. Even when I was married, my husband wasn't helping me, so I preferred that a divorce was better. We need help. We ask Obama to do everything that he can. Before the first election, we thought that Republicans wouldn't care about the poor, that they'd look at us like we weren't people. We pled Obama to come, to rule, to be President, so he can help us. We need his help. God bless us all and all human beings. Thank you.

Response: Thank you for your thoughtful comments that make clear the critical importance of stable and permanent housing.

Comment: I work part time for Mass Alliance of HUD for Tenants, and not only am I a mother, I'm a person who has Section 8. What I was asking is if the federal government could help, but in addition to them helping us, is there any way possible we, as folks, could come together and address the politicians who we vote for and are [inaudible] with year after year? Instead of just meeting in this library, go to their homes, go to their office, and come together?

We have a line item which, if possible, everybody could sign off on before the meeting is over with or after the meeting you can come to myself, Rhonda, and my boss Michael Kane as well. With this here, we're going to send these things to the politicians to let them know that we mean business, we're voting for them for a reason, and they can't be representing us if they're not going to do the job for which we elected them to do.

I know it's separate from the issue, but I, myself, am looking for work. With these minimum wage jobs, that's nothing that's going to pay our market rents, so if anybody has some suggestions they can suggest

to myself or other people here, it would be helpful and insightful. I have a college degree, and just like Mr. Johnson I think it was who spoke earlier, the gentleman here in the blue, I've never been homeless but I do have a Section 8. With my college degree, I've been looking for work for four years now. Based on the recession, there's really nothing out there, so what is a person like myself going to do if I'm displaced because I have my two younger kids who live at home with me? They're working and currently I have disability. If someone could help me with that, and if we could come together, like I said, as a people, to march down to these politicians' office or sit at their homes and let them know, "If you displace me, where am I going to go?"

Response: I don't want to sound crass, but I don't know. That's a broader question for society. I can provide subsidy and housing only for those folks that the federal government gives me money for. That answer is not meant to be crass; it's meant, I suppose, to let folks realize the seriousness of what we're facing. I can tell you this: the Boston Housing Authority would not be in the situation it is in if the federal government had fully funded our programs.

I would also add, in the context of market rents – Michael Kane

made reference to a Globe story; I think he was referring to one about a week ago. Michael, there was a follow-up story – I don't know if you saw it – today on the front page of the Globe, that talked about the market rates in Massachusetts. Massachusetts currently has the sixth highest private market rate rents in the country. The average for Massachusetts is \$1,000 per month. If you narrowed that down to Greater Boston, however, which is where the vast majority of our Section 8 certificate holders are, it is closer to \$1,800.

Just as an aside, I have three children; two that are adults. One of them had to move out of Boston and he's a union plumber. He does pretty well, but he couldn't afford to rent in this town. Another son, who works for the city government, had to move out of my neighborhood to another neighborhood because he couldn't afford the rents in our neighborhood. So, what folks expect at \$1,800 average rent, let alone poor folks – folks that are making a reasonably good working wage can't afford to live in this town anymore, and something's got to be done about it. I'm not exactly sure what the solution is, but I think it's ultimately the responsibility of the federal government to come up with some solutions in that regard.

I would also add that I think it said that 50 percent of the families that are renting now are paying 50 percent, or more, of their income toward rent. Think about that. People are making choices. Do they rent, and then say, "Can I pay the heat bill this month? Can I buy food for my kids this month?" Families, elderly, disabled people shouldn't make those kinds of choices in this country; it's just not appropriate.

We also have 40,000 families on our Section 8 and public housing waiting lists now – 40,000. I have a 98.52 percent occupancy rate. The good news is we're using our limited resources to the maximum. The bad news is there isn't much room to make any dents in that waiting list for public housing. If we're not giving out Section 8 certificates, there's no movement in the lease housing. I manage and oversee about 14,000 units of public housing and about 11,000 units of leased housing. You do the math, and even if I vacated all my public housing units and all of my Section 8 certificates were turned over, I still wouldn't meet the demand on my waiting list. Not only are we facing some short-term, serious problems about displacement, but there are larger questions I know Michael, Steve, and others have thought about is what do we do with some of these folks that are on these

waiting lists, not only in Boston but throughout the country?

Comment: I'm sure that people in this room don't have to convince each other how bad these cuts are. I'm sure that everybody in this room feels the pain in degrees, from the folks who are on Section 8, the folks trying to get Section 8, folks in public housing, advocacy groups, and public housing staff and BHA staff all agree about how bad these cuts are. I think we should start seeing these cuts – and I don't even think we should use phrases like "budget cuts" or "the market;" I think we should say "this is an attack. This is an attack by those with [inaudible phrase, applause], on the vast majority of people who don't have anything." As Bill was just saying, here it isn't just people who are on Section 8.

I was looking at a video the other day with Ms. Edna that was talking about how the average worker in an enterprise – the average worker; we're not talking about people who are unemployed, people who are on disability, people who are on social security, but the average worker – now has to work a month to make the same amount that the chief executive officer makes in one hour, and that's getting worse and worse. Wrapped up in that statistic is what's happening right now to all of us. To look at the average rents in Boston now, if you take

somebody making \$50,000 a year, that person is not poor. Somebody making \$50,000 a year can afford about \$1,250 by HUD standards, rent plus utilities. Show me the three bedroom apartment you're going to find for \$1,200. That's somebody making \$50,000. So, you're talking about a broad-based attack on the standard of living of the vast majority. That's why all the wealth is going to the one percent. That's why it's happening. It isn't magic, it's because the one percent is using their political power to gut these programs that we depend on and to gut the [inaudible, applause] of the vast majority.

We've just witnessed the death of a magnificent man – the death of a hero – Nelson Mandela. It might be worth us asking, here and in the meetings to come, "What would Nelson Mandela do when faced with cuts of possibly 500 people off the program?" And even if, through heroic efforts, we're able to avoid that, what about all the things coming down in the next year that Bill just talked about? What would Nelson Mandela do? I'm sure he would urge us to say, "Don't take it. Don't move."

I was in a building meeting yesterday at 760 Cummins Highway – I'll give you the address – where there are a lot of people who aren't on Section 8 facing a big rent increase, and there are a lot of

people who are on Section 8 facing the possibility of cutbacks in the payment standard to 100 percent increase in their share. We all joined forces and sent a letter to the landlord saying, "We want to negotiate the rent increase for non-Section 8, and we want you to get as much from the Housing Authority as you can, as long as the share from the tenant is only 30 percent of their income." That's our negotiating platform. People should be organizing, building by building, to demand that. Now, why is the landlord of this building, who just bought it, seeking a rent increase? Because they're right next to a future subway stop on the Fairmount line. No, who paid for that subway stop on the Fairmount line? It wasn't that owner; it was all of us, all of our tax money, all of our effort to put in a subway stop that is creating the value that that owner is using to raise rents. We've got to stop that. We've got to say, "We will defend people, building by building, home by home, refusing to let them get evicted." For people who were forced out of their homes, we should be saying, "We're going to the State House. We're going to the HUD building. We're going to City Hall, not because we blame them, but because this is not a normal situation." If we're asking, "What would Nelson Mandela do?" he would be leading us into the State House saying, "This is where we're

going to live if you're going to push us out of our homes." So, as we meet in the future, working together with the Housing Authority, we should be pledging that nobody is going to get evicted because of these cuts. Whatever we have to do, we're going to have to do it. There are folks looking to sign up for the neighborhood organizing committees for next steps on how to plan the struggle, by all means, see either me or Ms. Edna here. Thank you.

Response: Thank you for your thoughtful comments that make clear the critical importance of stable and permanent housing.

Comment: MB: I'm going to attempt not to be emotional, because this is a very emotional position that I fear that I'm in. Since this is being recorded for Washington, the message isn't really for the Housing Authority; the message, really, is for Washington. I want to start off thanking the Housing Authority for their partnership because partnerships are a great thing. Congress said, in '98, that they wanted residents and the Housing Authority to be in partnership around making decisions. It just seems like, right now, Congress isn't willing to go into partnership with Americans that are not elected and working for the government and we're disappointed in that because people who are making decisions about our

lives are not allowing us to have a strong, strategic decision-making voice and that's not acceptable. We are intelligent human beings, passionate about our own lives, and we should be the ones making decisions about our lives. I am the person they talked about earlier with the postcard campaign to write President Obama and our Congressmen and Congressmen that have not seen themselves as ours because they've been elected from different states and different districts; that will not be a hinder for the postcard campaign committee because if all of the panel vote, then we feel that all of them are instrumental to us, regardless of whether they are from Missouri or Ohio.

Our campaign is the one that is reaching across the nation. We are standing as a nation of the working poor to say, "Our circumstances do not give you the right to decide that you cannot represent us. You are to represent each and every one of us, because housing is a human right." America stands as one of the greatest nations in the world, and you can't be a great nation and offer trillions of dollars to other folk, and then let your folk be on the street. That doesn't make you great, because your family is your first ministry and we are America's family. I just really wanted to say to those who will hear this tape: what housing is – and I

think sometimes people forget and they think that housing subsidy is something that someone in Washington signs off and says, "I will pay a portion of your rent," and they think that's what subsidy is. If it is, then the Boston Housing Authority has been living a lie, because here, in Boston, housing means you have an address. If you have an address, you can get subsidy. If you have an address, you can get a check. If you have an address, you can get food stamps. If you have an address, your children can go to school and not be taken away from you. You need an address, and for us, this address is very crucial. In the Housing Authority here in Boston, there are food pantries on the first floor that give away food or have food for a dollar. In the Boston Housing Authority, here, we work in partnership so that people have medical coverage who don't have medical insurance. We have people that come into the buildings and provide human services to people who are in need. That's more than housing. That's more than a subsidy. We are talking about something that makes a city great. We are not great being accident. You know, we are great because we have always been in partnership with the government, and Washington needs to understand that they need to be a partnership throughout the United States as

we are in Boston. This is a very important thing.

It's passionate for me because, yes, I have a daughter who is receiving subsidy. I'm from O.P. I'm from Orchard. It's how I grew up. Public housing has been generous to my family, because you know what? We were homeowners. We were homeowners way back in the day. The house burned down and the housing projects were across the street. They knocked on the manager's door, woke him up, opened up a unit, and let us move in that night. You could do that in 1968. You can't do that now, but it was housing that saved us on a cold winter day when our house burned down. That's why I have always been passionate. In my entire adult life, I have worked. I have volunteered. I have worked the last three years, with no pay, running an organization. I'm compassionate about what I do because I understand the importance of housing.

So, I wanted to say to HUD and Congress and anybody else who is listening to this tape or reading it, that you are talking about lives, you are not just talking about signatures. The vet that came home and, mentally, could no longer get themselves together. The woman whose husband beat her so bad that she had to go in hiding and have a different address from him. The child

who has asthma so bad that they can't breathe, and the parents can organize and make the Housing Authority change their position on how they house people. When rodents were taking over where we were living – how the housing authority sat down with us and researchers from Harvard and Tufts and B.U. School of Medicine to change the way we build housing in Boston. You're asking for all of that partnership to be cast aside, and I'm saying that that's not acceptable. Residents here have worked really, really hard. We love where we live. Our housing here isn't a subsidy for the majority of people. Our housing is our homes. We are vested in them. We want to keep them. We want to expand them. When we – like myself and my oldest daughter and my youngest daughter – could financially handle it, we moved out and bought a home so that somebody else could come in where we were. We're not looking to stay forever, but we want the housing to be there forever for whomever needs it at whatever time in their life that they need it. Everyone who came to housing, they came to housing with a reason and a purpose. Nobody woke up in the sixth grade and said, "When I grow up, I'm going to live in public housing and I want the government to pay part of my rent." That was no girl's dream. That's not what a man said that

he wants to do with his family, but those are situations that happen when you lose your sanity. When you go to war for your country, you can't handle it when you get back. When you lose your job. When your child's medication takes all of your income. There are a lot of reasons why people end up in public housing, and it is not because we are lazy, trifling, no-good, good-for-nothings, trying to get someone free off of somebody else working. We are here because situations put us here and the government is elected by the people and they have to understand that they have been elected by the people, for the people. They are elected there for us, not for those who were born here, not for those who weren't born here, not for those who have \$100,000 jobs; it is for everyone who sleeps here at night. That is who the government is supposed to be responsible for. Even if you don't vote, can't vote, don't understand how to vote, those people have still been elected in order for us to have a better life. We cannot remain silent on this issue, and we cannot remain the greatest nation in the world if our children have to wonder if they're going to sleep in cardboard with rats running over them at night.

Response: Thank you for all you do and have done for public housing residents in this city for decades.

Comment: I was born in Boston. In fact, I was born in Boston City Hospital, the old city hospital. I come here today representing a [inaudible] group called Men's Health and Recovery, 744 Albany Street. My director of my program is named Mr. Douglas Lomax, who you may have heard of. We have a group called [inaudible]; it's about 10 or 12 of us gentlemen and it really centers around helping men, who have kids, in the way of child support and how they deal with the baby's mother and the child and the courts and so forth. We also deal with housing and pretty much any other issue that faces people with low income, in particular in the city of Boston.

Me, myself, am in a program called Anchor Inn. It's on Long Island and it centers around getting housing. I'm waiting to get housing. I'm actually at the top of the list for it, but I'm in limbo now because of the various issues that we're here for. I just would like to, from my perspective, try to give this room and our guests here insight of homelessness. Some people here, when you say "homelessness," – and I don't want to assume – have a ready-set vision in their mind of a person who's on the street. We all know that you can become homeless for various reasons; you could lose your job. I don't want to go on because I might

miss some, but there are all walks of life where I am. Some people are surprisingly intelligent. Some people, if only they had another shot, you'd probably never ever see them again. Then we have some, unfortunately, that have mental health issues and that's a whole other story. But, the vast majority of people just [inaudible] themselves not being able to pay the rent or not being able to sustain the cost of living, and so they're looking for subsidized housing.

Me, myself, because of my past – and I'm not ashamed of anything that I did in the past because of what I'm doing now and what I plan on doing in the future, it allows me to hold my head up high, because it ain't where you come from, it's where going. I know that for a fact, because some people that may have a record and may have committed a crime or two in their past, that doesn't mean that that's who that person is meant to be or who that person is going to be. It's simple; it was a chapter in that person's life. It was a chapter in my life.

There are some, unfortunately, who think that people who have a record or have been involved in crime and have had a problem with drugs or something are inherently evil people, amoral people who are just inclined to do bad things. That's not the case. There are a lot of success stories where I

am; people who excel further. In the program that we have at Men's Health and Recovery, we have groups from Monday to Friday, and the group of less than 40 gentlemen, all with [inaudible], all with problems with drugs in their past, but all act responsible today, all of them take care of their kids, all have jobs, and all do the right thing and go to church. The only reason why I say that – not to come up here and blow my own horn or their horn – but we are all connected, the community. I love Boston. We all love the Patriots, the Red Sox, the Bruins. We're all in this thing together. You can't divorce yourself from a class of people from this city. When the bomb happened at the Marathon, I was just as hurt and disrespected and angry at those people who did that, as one of the victim's own family members, because I'm from Boston. If we don't have anything, we have a sense of camaraderie when it comes to dealing with issues. Homelessness is an issue.

It would behoove the Boston Housing people to do the best they can to get everyone housing. I'm sure it's not feasible to house every person, but as many as possible, because everyone I knew who was homeless and finally came in and said, "I got my keys, Joey," and showed their keys, immediately I saw the sense of responsibility to them, the

sense of purpose. You don't have no hope when you don't have a place to go to, when you just waiting on the lotteries for your name to get called that you have a bed for the night in a homeless shelter. You need to, at least, have a hope that one day, someday, you'll be able to be housed. I say to people, "Even if it's a hole in the wall with a set of keys, it belongs to you. You get a stopping point." You want to be able to look at those homeless shelters as trampolines to the next station in life, not something that, 20 years from now, you're still in the lottery trying to get a bed.

That's my hope, that you will look at people because a lot of people are still not getting placed because of their [inaudible], and it's unfortunate because some of these people committed these crimes when they were teenagers and they're so far removed from that ignorant person on that day they committed that crime, and it's a shame that they still have to wear it around their neck like an albatross, holding them down from excelling in life.

There is talent in every human being. I'm not going to get religious, but I'll get spiritual. God didn't make no junk. Every human being, every one of us, has the talent, something that we can do that we don't even need to practice it. I see it, but because of this or that, they end up being inside the shelters, or

lower, worse, on the street. Then you mix that, couple that, with drugs because the hopeless get tangled up in drugs and it snowballs in the opposite direction.

We're trying to start snowballing in the other direction, in a positive direction. For instance, the program that I'm in, I just went there – a friend told me to come up there and walk him up there. I went up there four months ago. I have not missed a day of going up there to Men's Health and Recovery and Mr. Douglas Lomax. This man comes from the same upbringings as myself, and many of us, in the communities that got caught up in the drugs and the crime and the mentality – just the way you thought. Everything I was raised to believe of being a man, I found out was the opposite; it was wrong. I had it wrong. It's almost like a 180-degree difference between what a man really is supposed to be and how he was supposed to act.

I'm late, but I'm here, and there are a lot of brothers who are with me, too, that figured this thing out and they want to get back and want to help. We like to work with the people in housing and whatever else when it comes to community – making a place a more better place, a more safer place, ending homelessness, ending violence, ending crime. I truly believe it's all relative;

everything relates to everything. How we relate to police, how we relate to small businesses in the area – there’s no more “I’m doing me.” There’s got to be a community. There’s got to be a “We.” It’s almost like you have a family and your brothers and sisters fight all day and you never come together until there’s a funeral or a tragedy or something.

Regardless of what is the reason why we come together, when get together, we should be able to do some good things. Boston is a very extraordinary city, and Massachusetts is an extraordinary state, because I hear other people come from other states and they’re so incredulous about all the services they have here because, in different states, they don’t even have services. None. You truly are homeless if you have no home place to go in other states. We have no idea the opportunities we have here and I just think that we should take advantage of them.

Response: Thank you for your thoughtful comments that make clear the critical importance of stable and permanent housing.

Comment: I’m here from the Boston Health Commission. We have a task force that we set up to fight stuff like this. I’m going to sum it up as quick as I can. This is basically rich against poor, but the people count. Your vote counts. If you’re homeless, you don’t

count. Guys, we need to get an address so everybody counts. We all need to come together. There’s an epidemic going on out there. [Inaudible phrase].

I’ve done 30 years in. I got hurt in 2008; I’ve been homeless ever since then. I’m a single parent. I’ve buried a family member of mine. I buried my kid’s mother. I’m a single granddad as well. I’m going to school, currently, as well. So, for me, to get a place would be great. I’m going to school to get my college degree, as well. While I’m doing it, it would help me a little bit better if I had a place to go to, to call home, and my grandkids could come over to as well.

On that note, I’m going to say “Thank you.” We’re new to this, but you shall be seeing us out there around the public community. Thank you for your time.

Response: Thank you for your thoughtful comments that make clear the critical importance of stable and permanent housing.

Comment: I live in the South End, so I’m going to tell you gentrification. I’m one of the old-timers – about 40 years in the South End.

We all know that at certain times, we’re all going to go down hard at one point. We’re all going to have some bad times, but true to a point, we

never know when it comes, right? I had an incredibly great job. I traveled all around the world. I was an international educator. I collaborated with a great many things – putting schools together, bringing them in to Boston; the first time for a lot of the teachers from different countries coming in to see Boston. I had a good bank account and I had a good life.

About five years into my college professorship, I came down with sepsis bacteria in the blood and in the urinary tract. I would call that the yin and yang of death. I contracted this, I guess, eight years ago. I’m an eight-year survivor. There’s no one like me; I’m the sole one. I knew god was with me, but as a great many of you who have had some really tough things happen to you know, when you’re down for the count, especially in your health, even when you have a good plan, there’s money that has to be paid out.

I slowly saw my savings go. I was a good saver. I had lost a pension that my school was in line to give me because I became ill with about three months to go in my term. So, I lost that. With another funding that I had in the shares of my company – my company before teaching – Wall Street crashed, if you can remember that, and that went. So here I was. I had to move. I didn’t have the money to support a \$1,500

[inaudible] and I was deathly ill. You see me standing today on one crutch, but it's taken almost four years because I had no feeling below my ribcage down. All the things the doctors didn't believe in me, I disproved them. I'm not healthy yet; I'm still fighting it.

I'm sharing this with you because the first three words in the preamble of the Constitution of this country are, "We the people." We the people, in this country, are a special lot. When some people say, "Well, this is a very diversified city," a great many people think color, culture, language, but I like to think of it also as sociability of economical diversity, which means that everybody who works should have the same amount of respect, no matter how much money you bring in to a city. Boston's a come-in for the very wealthy, but the little guy is still needed. That's what makes a city worth it, is diversification. So, whether we are not millionaires, whether we are poor and whether we are worried to death... I don't know where I'd be.

What really got me was receiving a letter about two days ago from a woman who was a fellow teacher. She became as ill as I was – deathly ill. She just saw everything go. No money, no nothing; she has no family like I don't have. So, she's all by herself. She's deathly ill, and where does she

go? There was no place to go. There were waiting lines everywhere, for affordable housing. She went to Rosie's Place. She said, "By the grace of god, they found me a place, but I had been homeless for several months." I really don't think, in this day and age, any city should ever neglect the shelters that are needed to help the homeless, in this, or any other, city. Most people think, "Oh well, we're on the BHA plan, the voucher plan, because we just don't work hard enough." There are many of you, and I know this because I did it, who worked over 10 hours a day; we just didn't make enough to stave off some of the bad things that happened in our life.

I work sponsoring help for veterans. I've done this for over 10 years. The statistics for homeless vets coming out of Iraq and Afghanistan – 2011 was the first year that many, if not most, veterans coming home had two amputations; arm and leg, both legs, sometimes more. One out of every 25 homeless people is a veteran just out of the war, so it is, really, a very sad situation that we're faced with in this country.

To me, it is unconstitutional that there is a prejudice being shouldered by Congress, backed by the Federal Government, that would take away our lifeline, our hope, our

faith for a better tomorrow. That's what gets me up in the morning. That's going to be taken away from us? No, I don't think so. We need more than just praying to god. We need to get interaction ourselves, because whatever god has given to us, we've got to use. Each and every one of you has that gift, that power of life. I really think postcards, jam the boards, and we'll think of other things to do. I think this Congress, first of all, should all take a walk out. We need everyone to really be new, fresh, because I think they forgot how valuable we all are, and it doesn't matter what our economic status is; it's our heart and soul and that's on the line as well. God bless you all. Thank you for listening.

Response: Thank you for your thoughtful comments that make clear the critical importance of stable and permanent housing.

Comment: I wasn't planning on speaking, but I decided to, last minute.

First of all, I would like to give a shout out, as the kids say, to all of the people that work for you.

I am floored by their professionalism and what they do with the little amount of time and the little amount of resources to make sure that everyone stays on their vouchers and to calculate rent, especially when you have

people like me who have three jobs that don't have steady income. I thought I would say that first.

I'd love for the Federal Government to hear about how good of a job the BHA is doing.

Also, the inspectors and the people who dispatch them, et cetera.

Someone said earlier that a roof over their head is a right, not a privilege and I agree. No one deserves to be out on the street, unless that is something that someone would love to do; I can't imagine that, but that's their right. Everyone should be allowed a roof over their head. There shouldn't be any compromise on that, either. It just is a right.

Real quick – I won't go into it too much – how I ended up with my voucher was I was very ill and couldn't work. I had all kinds of savings. I had a retirement account that I had provided to. Sometimes, savings just isn't enough. No matter how much you plan, sometimes you just can't plan. Once I started doing better, my mom got very ill and she died. Everybody's got the thing that they went into. I had a relapse last summer and I thank god for Section 8. Even with it, I still had to go into debt to pay my bills, but I probably would have been out on the street had I not had a voucher. I have no idea

what I would have done without it. I'm one of those folks who, "Okay, yes, there's disability out there and maybe I could get on it, but they require you to not work for a period of time. What am I supposed to do in that period of time to pay my bills if I'm not working for 90 days?" So, I find work where I can.

I don't have children, so that's a whole other thing, but I don't think anyone in this room is less deserving than anyone else of their subsidy. Everyone here either has health issues – everyone here works very hard; disabled or not, even if you're not working for pay, I assure that you're still advocating for other people and doing things and getting out there and being a human being and helping others. No one is any less deserving than anyone else, at least as far as I look at it.

Last but not least, in my religious tradition – and I'm not trying to push my beliefs on anybody, but – we believe in action and prayer, and I will be setting up a prayer altar not only for the housing but for health. If anyone would like their name on my prayer altar, please let me know; I'd be happy to put it on there for you.

Response: Thank you for your thoughtful comments that make clear the critical importance of stable and permanent housing.

Comment: I am a Section 8 voucher holder. I became disabled in 2000 and received some great support so I was able to become housed and take care of myself. I share this, and I'm going to make this very quick: to take away a child's home is to take away their light and right to exist and grow. We are all someone's child.

Response: Thank you for your thoughtful comments that make clear the critical importance of stable and permanent housing.

Comment: I live in the South End. For a long time, I've lived there in my house. It is public housing, but only the property of the house; it's still my house. [Inaudible phrase] and last year, I came here to talk to you and some people like Mike, the manager of [inaudible] and the mayor, and Gloria.

My kids walked to sign the letter of the [inaudible]. [Inaudible phrase] the public housing; only the issue of the neighborhood and the mending of the house. [Inaudible] security code [inaudible phrase] come in my house, because the door is severely damaged. [Inaudible phrase] the door of my house. Security, [inaudible phrase], the windows... I don't know who will talk to me because last week that Gloria and Michael [inaudible phrase]. [Inaudible phrase] took my bags in my house. [inaudible phrases]

because many times, many times, I don't know [inaudible phrase]. [Inaudible phrase] to my son and me, because last year we come in here looking for Gloria [inaudible]. [Inaudible phrases].

Response: Could you folks work with this woman to make sure that the individual problem is resolved? That's probably best.

The inspectors work for her, okay? I promise you these two folks will help you.

Comment: You're here tonight probably because of a brochure or a letter that was included in your rent statement or mailed directly to you. That is some of the work that we do, the Boston Resident Advisory Board. We also really review the annual plan and then we sit down in a group and we review it with the help of a magistrate who deciphers everything so we understand what's going on. Also, at our last meeting the RAB voted that we recommend to Congress and to the President that we have 100 percent funding of rental housing and public housing. Let's hope they are listening. This recording will be transcribed and they will get that also.

Let's continue with the meeting and other speakers.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

Comment: Hello everybody. How are you doing? Here directly, this doesn't affect me, but it does affect me. I'm actually a homeowner. I go by the name of Mr. Industry C-1. My government name is Clifton Braithwaite. I'm an activist. I feel that we have to get more involved.

What are the different stages to get the information to the people? Once I had put what was going on online, a lot of people didn't know about it, so I'm wondering, how do we get this information to the people and what's actually going to affect us and affect people who are dealing with low-income housing and Section 8? There are some misconceptions going out there from the federal and down to the local, and I like to be able to get that literature, if possible, to give it to the people who sometimes miss out. Some people, we know, do not look at the mail because the first thing we think about is our bills. A lot of people just push that housing paperwork to the side and they miss out. We've got to do more of a guerilla-type warfare of getting the information to the people using the youth, creating jobs at the same time, to get the youth involved to understand how important it is to deal with housing and what the situations are.

I'd like to come back later on. I want to give a little bit more substance on actually

what's going on on the legal end and how I can help and how my colleagues can help to get this information to our Congresspeople, to our legislators, to our Councilors. Someone hit me online and said, "Well, I'm a homeowner so it doesn't bother me." It does affect us because if my neighbor is not straight, that means I'm not straight and that means I'm going to be effected by crime and all kinds of nonsense that could go on in our communities.

A lot of people up here on the boards, I've seen along the way so I know they are hard workers and they get it in, but we are missing people that miss the boat. I met a young lady earlier; I'm so surprised that someone young is engaged to understand what the process is. Most of us, in all communities – I don't look at communities as color; I look at communities as financial differences – that are below making \$50,000 a year are struggling. I want to know, what will it take to help get the message out to the people, as well as protect our interests to bring some other plans? I really believe the whole Boston Housing, Section 8, has been a pyramid type of situation. It doesn't give you any type of uplifting to want to own your own. I know we do have programs. I know we do have some programs, but most of the programs don't affect a lot of us and don't help us.

Let's take a few more minutes; let's look at the young men and women that are coming out from jail. They are automatically banned if they have a felony, so where are they supposed to live? We have to look at all of these different situations. We have mental illness, our elderly; there are so many different avenues that are effecting us across the board. What can I do? I'm putting this out there on the table – if you don't know me, you need to know me, because I only live to help out others. I'm not going to drop the organizations I work with because I don't do any work for them; I do it for us. So, what can I do to help you? Anyone in the crowd, my number is 617.637.2468. My name is Clifton Braithwaite. You can go through my real name or you can Google "Mr. Industry C-1." In my opinion, I'm a good-looking guy, so my face will pop up anywhere. If you want to get the information out there, my team is that team – TFCC, Team Future Committee for Change. I don't want to drop any other organizations because that's who I'm the co-founder of and I can make any decision to help my people. What do you need from me, bottom line, to get the information to the people?

Response: Thank you Clifton. You raise some good points. We have not spoken much about the effect this could have

on property owners. We did talk, this morning, about some of the larger property owners and organizing around them to take a rent decrease. Several, or many, of our property owners are mom and pop property owners, in other words somebody who owns a three-decker, and they are counting on the rents to pay their mortgage. That is an issue that, I think, should be taken into consideration as the organizing effort unfolds. If a landlord who has one or two Section 8s [inaudible] and can't make their mortgage payments, they could end up homeless. As Clifton said, that brings a whole load of foreclosures and abandoned buildings. Abandoned buildings bring less tax breaks to the city, they bring crime; they bring lots of things. I think, as this effort unfolds, that certainly a group of folks should probably be brought into the organizing effort because it could have some negative impacts on them and on the surrounding neighborhoods.

One other thing I would add – and Clifton, we can talk after the meeting, and I'm sure some of our organizers here would have ways of getting you into the loop on this – but I would like to correct one thing. There was someone who spoke at length, appropriately and very eloquently, this morning about the young folks and some not-so-young folks that have CORIs and that they are

automatically banned. They are not automatically banned from public housing. We do do CORI background checks on all of our public housing applicants and all of our leased housing applicants, but a record does not necessarily preclude you from getting into our public housing program. If the information on your arrests is a significant part of your past, and/or if you can show mitigating circumstance that you have made efforts to correct the issues that created the CORI problem, then you are able to move into public housing and to get a leased housing certificate. The problem, right now, is nobody's getting a leased housing certificate, CORI or no CORI. Again, as I indicated this morning, and I think it's worth saying here, is that we have a 98.5 percent occupancy rating in our public housing program and 40,000 people on the waiting list. Even the vast of folks on our public housing program are certainly not moving –

I think that those issues are important issues and thank you, Clifton, for your comments. If we've got to stay until midnight, all the tenants will be heard, okay?

Comment: Thank you very much. I would like to say that I am here to be part of the solution instead of part of the problem. I am trying to speak

for people with disabilities, elderly, and voucher holders that I know who could not be here tonight for various health reasons and other things. I have been a long-term tenant of either public housing or Section 8 voucher, and frankly, I have seen the good, the bad, and the absolutely illegal. Mister McGonagle knows about the efforts that were made to save the Warren Hall building in Brighton as affordable housing, and he did make some commitments in regards to that which we would like to get in writing further. I also attended a recent rally in which Mayor Walsh promised to make a line item available to help affordable housing in the city of Boston. I would like to ask that you work with the Mayor around securing that commitment so that if the funds are further sequestered on the federal level, the City of Boston funds can be made available.

We appreciate what is being done in the state, but the reality is that, for people like me and for people that have retired and people that are stuck in low-wage jobs, the Section 8 vouchers and the public housing funds are really the only places where people can live. I have to support that those should be funded at 100 percent. I will take that message to Washington if I have to, and I ask that you join me in taking that message to Washington as well. Dave [inaudible name] did actually go

to Washington and got vouchers, and now the vouchers look like they're going to be cut because of sequester. I think that this is an entirely frustrating problem, but, as I say, I'm here because I'm trying to be part of the solution. I would like to get real commitments, in writing, from people that can make a difference and say, "We're going to stick to this, and this is what's really acceptable."

Thank you very much.

Response: Thank you, Karen.

Comment: My name is Phyllis Corbitt. I've lived in public housing for over 40 years. I've been on my task force at the Tenant Association. I'm on the RAB board. I'm also on the Mass. Law Reform Institute Board and also the Mass. Union of Public Housing Tenants Board. As Mr. McGonagle stated, we are well-known across the country, and Boston is one of the most organized and well-run. We do owe a lot of credit. Boston Housing works with us. I've seen other agencies and other housing authorities where people have no rights, but we're well-organized here. Okay, enough of that.

One question: my development was awarded \$540,000, but to me it could be \$540 million. But it's assigned for one specific reason. The reason they want to do is redoing where the dumpsters

are. I have bigger problems than where the dumpsters are. They got money to fix doors; all the doors don't need to be fixed. Can't we just fix the doors that need to be fixed?

I have a person that has lead in their apartment. The cabinets have to come off the wall. That whole wall has to come down. She's got mushrooms growing out of her bathroom wall. Her daughter went to the hospital because she thought she had throat cancer. They said, "Oh no, it's mold." The plasterer came in; he didn't even scrape, just plastered over what was there. If we're getting \$540,000, why can't we put it to things that we need?

They just took and changed the valves on our heaters. We get no heat now. We went from 100 degree heat to no heat. I live in a concrete building; the walls are damp, the walls are cold. The heater only works if your apartment is less than 63 degrees. Let me tell you, I got up this morning at 4:00 and the temperature said it was 24. My walls that are concrete, my house felt like I was in a cellar. I had a heater on, I was wrapped in a blanket, I had socks on; this is no way to live. They've got to come in and check the valves. They want a list of people. I meet people every day in my development. I can't make a list of them. People stop me, "We have no heat. It's freezing. It's freezing." They have to get

the company back and check every one of those valves. Some people got too much and some got none at all.

Like I said, they're giving us \$540,000 to fix the back where the dumpsters are. All you have to do is put a fence around them, with a concrete pad, and put the dumpsters on them so they'll be in one spot.

We need screens. I have tenants that have windows that are on the ground and kids stick their hands in the bedroom window of their kids. They don't have to specifically be industrial, but I've seen some elderly developments that have screens that don't look as industrial as industrial screens, but we need screens. We don't need doors on every single apartment; some apartments need them. Why can't that \$540,000 – or \$540 million, to me, that it could be – be used for what we need? You know my gripe about my elderly, but that's another story I won't get into because you told me I was getting it fixed. Thank you.

Response: Anthony, schedule a meeting with the Old Colony task force tomorrow. I'll go down and meet with you folks, personally, to find out about your issues.

A couple of things: one, we have spent, with all due respect, close to \$150 million in the Old Colony housing development in the past four or five years through a Hope IV

grant, which is a grant that we got through a competitive process.

I think it's important that the BHA say, for the record, that we have spent a lot of money there and that we do care about that place. It's obvious with the redevelopment effort that we've undertaken there. We will meet with you. We'll schedule that tomorrow. I'll be out as early as this week if we can schedule it, Phyllis, and we'll address those issues.

I would like to say, again though, in terms of the funding issue – and that's not to deflect what you said; I will meet with you and we'll make every effort to deal with your issues, Phyllis – but it does raise a point around what the funding levels we're getting for our operating budget from the federal – it's not just the leased housing program. We were funded, two years in a row now, at 82 percent of what HUD says, not what I say or what you say, we need to operate our public housing program effectively. That's 82 percent, 18 percent less than what the federal government, HUD, says we need to operate our public housing developments in this city. The capital budget is somewhere in the area of eight or nine million dollars this year in federal funding when we have about a \$500 million backlog of capital need. I understand there are problems. We'll do everything we can to

address them. We do everything we can to address problems in all of our housing communities, but while we're advocating and organizing around the leased housing issue, we should not lose sight of the fact that the operating budget is getting croaked and the capital budget for our public housing project is getting croaked as well. That's all the editorial comment I'll make on that.

Comment: Okay, my name is Concetta Paul, and I am part of a coalition of housing tenants, including Section 8 and public housing, as well as housing advocates who have formed the Save Our Section 8 Coalition so that we can save our homes. Some of you may have seen in the news last night that the Pentagon is buying helicopters from the Russians and this costs – and I can't remember the exact figure...I think a billion dollars.

It's so much money. A billion dollars they are spending to buy helicopters from the Russians to train Afghan soldiers. This one is going to America's good friend, Vladimir Putin – very good friend [audience laughter]. But, here in America, the poor, the working poor, we are looking at losing our homes.

I understand the politics of Washington, D.C. I'm not here to blame HUD or the Boston Housing Authority for the bad decisions that people

make in Congress. I understand that the President's hands are tied, somewhat, because there is a group of politicians in the House of Representatives who believe that A, it is okay to spend \$22 million on an F-22 fighter jet called the Raptor that has never seen combat in either Afghanistan or Iraq and will likely never see combat because it is full of problems. It's just sitting on the runway. They don't mind buying 20 of this aircraft, but it is not okay to provide housing for homeless veterans, and it is not okay to spend millions of dollars, or maybe hundreds of millions of dollars, as opposed to hundreds of billions spent on military hardware on tanks and jets and fighter planes that don't work. They can spend billions of dollars, but they cannot spend millions of dollars to help the BHA house the poor and the working poor.

As far as I understand it, about 185,000 families around the nation are facing getting the Section 8 vouchers pulled. Now, we know how Americans are. Americans are not going to let a homeless mother and her two kids freeze outside because the person lost the Section 8 voucher and they're homeless. This family is going to be housed, likely in a hotel, a motel, a homeless shelter. If you are charging, say, \$40 a night in a hotel; 185,000 people you multiply that. Do the math. I am thinking that it is more

cost-effective to have these people stabilized and housed in homes. It is better to spend this money that you'll be spending tomorrow to house them in a hotel or a motel, spend it now and keep them housed because we know that, when families are stable, it is much better.

I understand that Secretary Donovan, he cannot go up to the US House of Representatives and he cannot arm wrestle John Boehner and fight with him until Mr. Boehner decides that he is going to give us what we want, but here's what I am saying: there are some things that HUD, I am hoping, can do or try to do, and I have two of them. The first one is that I would like HUD to ensure that Section 8 and public housing remains funded, fully funded, at 100 percent. The second and final thing that I am calling on HUD to do is that if Congress does not step in, I'm calling on Housing and Urban Development to do some creative reallocation of resources. If HUD has the discretion to make line item adjustments, I'm asking HUD to make rental housing and public housing a priority, even if it means freezing some other programs, because, let's face it, a leaky roof is better than no roof.

I want to close by saying that the next steps that our coalition, the Save Our Section 8 coalition, is working on is we would like everybody here in this room to be a part of this

coalition and we have members here who have sign-up sheets. Steve Meacham is there from City Life and we have Michael Kane at the back also. So, before you leave here, [inaudible] with us about the next steps. You can see some of those members of our coalition, and myself as well, and Edna Willrich who represents the Resident Program Coalition. [Inaudible phrase] and all the members of the coalition. Thank you very much.

Response: Thank you, Concetta, very well said. If I could make one editorial comment about the purchase of the helicopters from Russia; she's absolutely right and I certainly believe the defense budget can be cut, but at least if the money is spent in the United States it creates jobs for Americans.

Comment: Yes. Good evening everyone. I was the youth that this guy talked about earlier, [inaudible phrase]. My question to Congress is when are they going to finally come clean about what's really going on? It's sad that it had to get to this point that we're sitting here, but we should have known something was going on when they cut the food stamps. [Inaudible phrase, simultaneous applause] and the sad thing is that everyone is effected. Me, as a youth, I've been on Section 8 for five years; I got my

voucher when I was 19. I couldn't believe it, but I got it.

What we need to start doing is starting to pay attention. We need to start going to these meetings and stop making excuses and stop making ourselves feel like we're powerless, we can't do anything about it, when deep down inside, you are the tax payer; you are the reason why the country is running. They take taxes out of our wages to build up certain things that they say they are doing, but my whole thing is that we can't control what the government is going to do because they already made up their mind. They know what they're going to do and they just put meetings like this forward just to act like it's taking progress to shut it down and behind closed doors, the decision's already been made.

[Inaudible phrase, simultaneous applause] these people day and night about what should be done and what's not being done, but when are we going to hold accountability for ourselves? They can only do so much, and by you being ignorant and not wanting to learn and not wanting to get on the bandwagon, that makes it easier for them to take things from us. We need to stop making ourselves victims all the time. We are the lower nail on the totem pole, getting things taken away from us, even though we are still paying our tax dollars. We have to ask

ourselves, go to these public officials, go to Congress, go to the President, and ask him and tell him, "This is what we want done with our tax dollars, because why are you taking money from me to build up another life for someone else and I'm doing all the hard work?" We have to really keep it real with ourselves and ask ourselves these questions, and we have to tell our children because how are they going to grow up with no house, no food, no schools? Everything is getting closed down. Everything they take money out of our taxes for is getting closed down. If this isn't enough to wake you all up, then I don't know what else to say.

We have to get on the ball. We have to turn on our TVs, open up the newspaper, go to the library, and start getting ourselves together. Stop saying, "Because I don't have this type of degree, I can't go talk to this person," or "Because I have this disability, I can't do this," or "Because I'm black," or "Because I'm white," or whatever. Oh well. We all have a common objective here right now, whether we're homeless, whether we're white, we're black, we're young, we're old: our housing is about to get cut. We all need to wake up and contact the appropriate local officials. I don't care if you speak good grammar, you speak slang, or whatever, you know how to talk and you know something wrong is going on.

[Inaudible phrase, simultaneous applause] you control what's going on. Don't let people in big suits and proper grammar scare you. No, you are the one working three or four jobs to pay this rent. If that rent doesn't get paid, who is going to be out on the streets? Not the boss. You.

That's all I've got to say, y'all. [Inaudible phrase, simultaneous applause], because even though they have their little mishaps here and there, they keep at least 70 percent of the people off the streets. They're not perfect, they can only do what they can to help people, but the rest, now, is going to come from you. You set tomorrow. You have these children who need care, who need aid. If these people are cutting off your aid, do you think they care about your children? No. Please keep up the fight and don't let [inaudible phrase, simultaneous applause]. Everyone here is somebody special and don't let anybody take that away from you.

Response: Thank you.

Comment: Before I even start addressing Congress and Washington, D.C.

There was somebody speaking before me that reminded me, two years ago, when Boston Medical had asked me to come and talk to the representative for housing regarding being a

single mom with a preemie. I was in a shelter since I was five months pregnant. I was a high-risk pregnancy. I had to have my son early because I was under a lot of stress. When I finally got my own place, they tried to cut me off a year after. When Boston Medical asked me to come and speak to these representatives, I said, "Yes, I will."

So, I came in, I sat down, and I talked to them. I got very emotional but it wasn't my fault. I explained to them, as a young mom who's been in this country over 20 years – I wasn't born in this country, but I've been here since I was five years old – and I've seen how my parents struggled to make sure I had a roof over my head, food to eat, clothes, and I know it's hard. As a single parent myself right now, I feel [inaudible].

I stand here before all of you, representing all other single moms that couldn't be here today, to say to Congress and the White House, "This is my second time talking to you guys, and I will keep talking if I have to walk to the White House with my disability, I will do that." I got into a car accident. I have a dislocated disk and arthritis in my lower back; I can't work. I'd been working since I was 13 but now I can't work and society keeps denying me. Why am I working? Why am I paying taxes? Why are any of us paying taxes if you guys are cutting our funding for housing?

You're trying to tell me an asthmatic and disabled person with a preemie should be on the street? I have a friend who is a veteran who fought in World War II. I see him standing on a corner asking for change. What was he fighting for?

I'm not addressing this to any of the HUD or Boston Housing; I'm addressing to you, President Obama. I'm addressing to you, House of Representatives. I'm addressing to all the high-level representatives out there who are sitting, and I know you guys are listening, and I know you guys were paying attention. You're saying this country is going bankrupt – why?

Because you guys are not putting the funds where it needs to be. You guys are caring more about, "Well, we need to get this money for that, and we need to get that money for that," but what about us who pay taxes here in America that can't afford a job or don't have enough degrees or experience? What am I going to tell my son tomorrow, when he says, "Mommy, why are we in the street?" Ask yourself that question. Put yourself in our shoes. Put yourself in our shoes and say, "What if that was me?" What would you do? That's what I want to know.

Response: Thank you, Edna.

Comment: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Robin Williams. I'm going to talk about [inaudible].

Today, my landlord came by and he told me that he has decided to raise my rent up to \$2,000. My rent is \$1,800 and I'm paying half of that. I looked at him and I said, "Well, I don't think the BHA is going to give you \$2,000." My apartment is not even worth \$2,000. I have four bedrooms. I'm disabled. I have two children who are disabled. With the cuts going on, I'm like, "Okay, if BHA doesn't give you the money, then what?" He said, "Well, Robin, I'm sorry. Either you pay the money or I'm going to have to evict you." I said, "You know what? Do what you've got to do." [Inaudible phrase, simultaneous applause], and I don't see no one in this room to lose their Section 8.

It's a shame that just two weeks ago the City of Boston just gave Boston Police a raise. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that the Boston Police don't need a raise. Yes, they do need the money, but that is too much. We've got other needs that need to be going on. We need housing. We need medical. We need a whole lot. Schools, education, it's ridiculous, and then the government says, "Oh, we don't have the money." You do have the money. You chose to do what you wanted to do. You chose to do what you wanted to do and it's not fair. Enough is enough.

It's time for all of us to stand up and say, "No. No," and start saying, "Yes, we want

housing. We want jobs. We want education. We want everything. We want [inaudible].” We’re working 30, 40 hours a week; they’re not. They forgot about us when we elected them into the office. We’re the ones putting money in their damn pockets. Excuse my language, but that’s how I feel. We elected them and they forgot all about us. They’re lining their pockets and they don’t care. But you know what? It’s time to change. 2014 is right around the corner; it’s time to change. It’s time to change.

Response: Thank you.

Comment: We get the government we vote for, people. As long as we keep step away with this color issue, they’re going to win every time. I learned from an old Irish guy who used to be racist, and he said the biggest misconception, as long as we are separated, they will win all the time. As long as we do not keep them accountable, let them know that the next year coming around, you are out of office, they are going to pick their waysides up and do their daggone jobs, but we have to vote. We have to get involved. We have to inspire young people. As long as you keep shooting down people’s ideas, we will constantly be doing these fights. I am 48 years old, and I can remember when I was in the room with my parents hearing

the same language again and again. Look at your West Roxbury. Look at your Ward 18, Roslindale. Those areas vote and they make their officials accountable, and we can do it all day long, people. When are you going to stand up and start making the next person be a part of the movement? In the last 10 years, my team has registered over 30,000 young people [inaudible phrase]. [Inaudible phrase] organizations that got the bacon that my team didn’t get. I tell you, we are not driven by money; we are driven by the sight of the lord. This wish is only going to work if we work together and keep them accountable.

Response: Thank you.

Comment: Hi everybody. My name is Jerry [inaudible name]. I’m not a tenant in Boston, but I work for tenants. I’m a housing case manager. I work exclusively with people who are living with HIV and are homeless or are in danger of becoming homeless, but there is nothing different with people who are living with HIV when it comes to homelessness and needing housing; we’re all the same.

Let me tell you that I was here in 1975 as a tenant organizer with the North Dorchester Tenant Organizer Committee when we tried to save rent control in Washington. We lost that

because the real estate interests, as a money class, bought the politicians; they bought the ballot that ended rent control, if you remember that. Do you remember that? I have been arrested with City Life trying to block home foreclosures and I’ve been working in the epidemic for 25 years.

I’m here to tell you that the crumbs that they are threatening to take away with sequester are nothing compared with the vast granaries of wealth and housing that are sitting out there that we could have now, as people, if we organized to get them. Right down the street from where I work, there’s a huge complex – one of those abandoned fitness places – that could fit 100 homeless families in it. Instead, I have to tell my clients, many of whom are women with children and families that are going into the emergency shelters, the hotels and the motels, hopefully not to get shipped out to Western Mass, living with five in a room and needing, desperately, housing. If we stop this sequester or we modify it, that’s going to do nothing to help the thousands or hundreds of thousands of people who need housing in Massachusetts and Greater Boston. Our struggle is much bigger than the sequester struggle, and anybody that tries to tell you that victory lies in getting a change in this little comeback – it’s a big comeback

– that we’re facing, that’s no victory. There are thousands of people that can’t even get on a waiting list, a waiting list that, itself, is decades long. They’re our sisters and our brothers. Those are the people we should be fighting for as a class.

We need assemblies of people to get together and to abandon political voting. We have the most progressive leadership in our state and in our Senate in the country. We don’t need to get them to vote any better than they’re voting. We need to get the system to change. I say don’t waste your time in trying to vote for change in this rotten, immoral, bankrupt system that only listens to money. The anger lies in the streets, in the margins, in takeovers of abandoned buildings, and to say no to these false solutions. It’s not going to be victory.

Even if we save the 500 vouchers – god, we’re going to fight like hell to save those, believe me, because those are thousands of people that we don’t want in the street – but our battle has got to go on and on. We live in an era of constant cutbacks. If we don’t want to be fighting these battles every six months, we’ve got to fight the big battle that stops the power and money [inaudible], the system of profiting. They will only build houses and apartments if there’s a profit in it. As long as we have that system, we’re doomed, and anybody that tells you different

is selling you a bill of goods. Please, put your faith in your own political power as working class people. Get together. I’m part of the People’s Power Assembly movement in this country that’s organizing people all over the country in alternative ways of fighting back than writing your Congressman. If you want to do that, god bless you; go ahead and do it, but our power lies in assembling ourselves in power, people power. Thank you.

Response: Thank you.

Comment: How is Boston Housing Authority going to determine which families get cut from the system? Has that been addressed?

Response: We talked about that in the morning session and at some point I was going to bring it up but now is as good a time as ever. First of all, let me repeat what I said this morning, and that is it is certainly my hope and, quite frankly, my expectation that we will not have to terminate anybody from the program. As I said this morning, and as I said publically and privately before, I’ll spend every nickel that the Boston Housing Authority has, that includes exhausting our Section 8 reserves which is pretty close to exhausted already, but we have some other funding that I would be willing to spend before I even consider terminating anybody from the program.

Having said that, the current Admin Plan calls for us to – if there are cuts like this – terminate folks from the program via who has been on the program the longest. Now, that was adopted years ago, and I’ll be honest with you, I didn’t really pay a lot of attention to it because I, quite frankly, never believed that we’d be in a position where we would have to terminate people from the program. I guess you never say never.

We’ll have a better sense this week, according to people I’ve talked to down in Washington and the [inaudible] Public Housing Authority. It looks like, according to the Washington Post and other folks, that there will be some kind of a deal cut between the Senate and the House that, according to the Washington Post, would reverse much of the sequester cuts. What the specifics are I don’t know. My point is, I guess, that we will have a better sense by the end of this week what we are facing, but more specifically, what the leased housing residents of Boston, this commonwealth, and this country are facing in terms of potential loss of subsidy.

If it turns out that we are forced, because of Congressional action or inaction, to terminate the subsidy of families, I would send out a notice to all of our residents and to the public and to advocates for their comments

on how we could best go about that. Some people have suggested that the people who have been on the longest is not a good way to do it. Some people have suggested that we do a random lottery – literally that you pick a name out of a hat, I guess.

MANY: No, no.

BM: Everybody's going to have their say on how it's done. These are just some ideas. Other people have suggested that we terminate folks that have the least amount of subsidy, that pay the most for their rent. The answer to that is we don't really know right now. We're going to see what happens this week. If it looks like we need to contemplate terminating people from the program, we'll send out a notice and we'll have another public hearing, like this one, before we decide how we have to go forward. So the public, you, Section 8 certificate holders, landlords, will all have the ability to comment and give their perspective on how we should best do that. Again, having said all that, I remain hopeful that we're not going to have to cross that bridge.

While we're on it, if I could say one other thing about the comments of the previous speaker... Overturning the sequester is a vehicle, is a success, is a victory, but he is correct. As I said this morning, we are not issuing any Section

8 certificates now. I have very little room in my public housing program, and I have 40,000 families on my waiting list for either leased or public housing. I could vacate all 13,000 of my public housing units and I could terminate the subsidies of all 13,000 leased housing certificate holders, and only get through two thirds of that waiting list. If this battle is won, and I'm hopeful it will be, there is still much work to be done.

Comment: I just want to say, quickly, that my name is Teri Vincent and I'm also a community activist as well as Clifton. I see a couple people here that I brought with me. As a community activist, I, myself, am willing to do what I have to do to stop the Section 8 budget cuts because all of us are going to be effected in this room. I, myself – I think it was maybe February – stood outside of Park Street and did a protest, along with some of my other brothers and sisters and our organizations and we sent letters to legislation, we sent letters to Congress, but yet, the sequester still happened; but yet, budget cuts still happened. There is no way there should have been cuts to people who are HIV-positive. There should have been no way that little children are cut off from Head Start.

There are so many programs that are effecting the poor. There is truly an attack on poor people. We're not

going to sit here, facedown, taking these cuts. We're going to fight, fight, fight. I just made sure I signed with my brother here, Steve Meacham. I advise everyone in this room to sign up with City Life, okay? Sign up because, without a voice... Listen, there's power in numbers. There is power in numbers and the more we get out there and fight, Washington will hear us. We will not stop until Washington does hear us. Instead of putting all this money into all these other programs that the federal government has, they need to put money back into the community – programs that will help poor people, programs that will help our youth, so that our youth can be successful and be self-sufficient. So, please, everyone, let's fight this together. Let's not stop. We have to let Congress know that we're just not going to take this lying down. We have to fight.

We also just have to make sure that we're in unity with BHA, and if we feel like BHA is screwing us around, then we have to get on BHA. I know they're trying, but we're not going to just accept this. We have to continue. If this man here says – and your name is McConnell, right? – if he said, by the end of the week, that Congress will let him know, well guess what? We need to be on the phone by the end of the week. We need to be on the phone by the end of the week: "Hey, what's up? What's

going on? What's happening in Washington? What's going on in Congress?" We need to know so we can give some action to the plan. We have to do this in numbers. We have to continue. We have to fight, but we also have to work with BHA and BHA has to work with us. Let's do this. Let's continue to fight.

Response: Thank you.

Comment: Good evening, everybody. My name is Annmaria Stone. I want to thank Boston Housing for having this hearing. It is absolutely imperative that HUD is funded at 100 percent. What I understand is if people lose their vouchers, where would they go? There are not sufficient beds. Some of these people, I would imagine, do have jobs here in the city and if they're put into a hotel in Western Mass as has been stated, they lose their job. They're working just to get by. [Inaudible] when you have a choice of food or medicine and you can't live like that. HUD has to be funded. This infamous one percent has to pay more of the taxes. [Inaudible phrase, simultaneous applause].

I, for one, am going to vote Congress out. I do not have the confidence in the current Congress to break the scrim off that they're experiencing right now. I just

have no faith in them. Thank you.

Response: Thank you.

Comment: My name is Linda Wilts and I want to make sure that Congress does fund HUD 100 percent. Like myself, many of you come here homeless. Personally, if I [inaudible phrase], I don't know what I would do. I would crumble and I probably would not survive. I would have nowhere to go; the shelters are full. There are many of us walking around the room and we need hope.

Response: Thank you.

Comment: Good evening, everyone. My name is Celaya Perry. I work with Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants with Michael Kane on affordable housing. I'm not being effected literally, but I am going speak on behalf of the people that are going to be effected.

On the Section 8 crisis, the importance is to save affordability of housing instead of seeing families displaced because Congress decided to put other things on their agenda that were more important, like the war in Iraq or Afghanistan. The importance is to save housing and how can we do it as a people? We need to be mobilized as the people and we need to march to D.C. and let them know the importance of housing and the importance of being together as a unity is to

be together in this fight as a family. Also, it's important to pressure Congress. It's important to pressure city Councilors. They're the ones that we put in. Yes, I'm from Roslindale. Yes, I do vote, but that's not enough. Voting is not enough. If they see my face, with other people, fighting on housing, maybe they will change their mind. Maybe if we bring them into our community and see how people are really, truly living, maybe they really will fund housing.

Another thing is, I just got back from California. I was on a conference with lawyers about the importance of expunging records. That's what we need to do. We can expunge people's records so they can get a job, they can get their education, and they can get housing. Let's work together, people. Let's work together. Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants, Steve Meacham, let's get together. Let's unite our people, and let's fight this war.

Response: Thank you.

Comment: Thank you. My name is Cheryl [inaudible name], also known as Susan, and I'm a Boston Housing Authority leased housing tenant. I wanted to start off saying I'm not a poor person and I don't see anybody in this room who is a poor person. I'm a child of god. I'm a child of the universe. I'm part of the universal spirit or the holy spirit

or anything that anybody wants to say. I deserve the same things on this earth that anybody else deserves, and yet there are members of my family, members of my race, and members of many other people's families and races who have died because they have been displaced, because their homes have been snatched from them, because they've been prevented from earning a living, because they're having their right to feed their children snatched away from them.

I'm not a [inaudible]. I know that my children are excluded as anyone else's children. My mother died of cancer. She had to live in an apartment where all the pipes were broken and then tenants were living in a situation where there was ice in their apartments, but people object to Section 8. I've been to meetings where Section 8 and leased housing were talked about and children of people that have to receive these things are called "riff raff," and that's the problem.

Elected officials are already holding themselves accountable to the people they want to be accountable to. They already know the problems here today. They already bought stocks in corporations that don't serve our interests, but they're serving the interests of those corporations. They're doing things to keep us down because we're looked at as the

competition. If we have something, they think they don't have anything. Have you heard of the words, "It's too late?" I can't do a lot of things because I have major health problems. I have a friend who is housebound; she can't go out but she [inaudible] in person.

There's a thing called reciprocal taxes. Reciprocal taxes mean that the federal government receives taxes from us all. Even when you just buy something in a store, you make taxes that come out of our pockets. It goes to the federal government and they're supposed to send it back to the states to service us. We hired them, but when Bush was elected he said, "No more reciprocal taxes." These kinds of things are going on, and yeah, I know something wrong is going on.

I knew something wrong was going on when Ed Brooke, who was Republican by the way, designed the Section 8 leased housing program some years ago. I heard him speak nationally on TV. He said the United States government is the richest country in the world, and they will make sure that their citizens, each and every person, receives a good home where they can support their children's welfare and interests, where they can protect their families and help them grow and develop in a healthy way. He said the people in Revere are subsidized; that's why they have their homes. The people

in the suburbs are subsidized; that's why they have their homes. Big time businesses and corporations are subsidized; that's why they have their homes. So, [inaudible phrase, simultaneous applause] should be able to be subsidized in the richest country in the world so that everyone can have what we deserve, and that's a home. We cannot raise our children when we don't have a home to live in. We cannot get up in the morning and do what society demands – that you go out clean and smelling good – if you can't jump in the shower and wash yourself. [Inaudible phrase, simultaneous applause].

Some of our representatives are fighting to keep this Section 8 leased housing going, fighting to keep everybody able to eat, everybody able to have an education, but they're being outnumbered. We thank them and we thank the people at the Boston Housing Authority. We thank the decent leasing officers who are trying to help us. We thank them and we urge them to keep up their efforts, but we need to recognize that there are too many that think we don't count and that we're riff raff, even though we're not.

Many of us have children that are in the military right now. We have children that are being sent to Iraq or Afghanistan. We have nephews or cousins that have died in the military or in

some other way. In my family, I have teachers; I have people that have started schools. It's been paid for. I'm not taking anything from anybody when I get what I should have already. It's already been paid for.

I'm just letting my elected official know that I know you want me to be homeless. I know you don't care a thing about me. I know that you want me to be down so that you can be up. I know that you don't want me to have a home and want to see me criminalized if I hold a cup up on the street. I know that you don't care that I don't even know where my son is right now because he's on the street and he can't feed himself. I don't like it and many of us don't like it. They can't get away with this forever. There is enough money now that none of this has to be happening. This is the richest country in the world, so we need to say something wrong's been going on for a long time, long before they took away rent control. These people are doing what they want to do and it's almost, just about, too late. I hope that somebody is able to work in a way that is going to see to it that we get what we should and that funding is 100 percent for housing and for other things people need to live instead of using it to hurt people and harm people and destroy people. They're going to create more homelessness. The people who work for the Boston Housing Authority will lose their

jobs at the same time they're saying that they're making jobs. They don't need to make jobs; let us keep the jobs we have and give us a minimum wage. All our leasing officers will be unemployed. Think about that. They're giving us nothing and we're giving everything. We're not poor. We help this country too; people just don't realize it. Thank you very much for listening.

Response: Thank you.

Comment: My name is Reverend Ellen Fritz and I wanted to come tonight because when I first came here to Boston after serving in the Peace Corps where there were a lot of people on the street, and this was in the late '70s, early '80s, we had a really difficult housing crisis. I worked at Pine Street Inn where we would go around with a van and pick up people at night who had died in the doorways from exposure. Our church, St. John the Evangelist on Bowdoin Street, when the housing at Beacon Chambers burned down, we put up our own shelter in our church hall for people because that was also in the wintertime. Then I worked at Parker Street shelter, which was for people who had mental illness when all of the mental hospitals closed down. Then, about eight of us got together and put together Sojourner House on Reagent Street in Roxbury because there was no

place for families to stay together if they had adolescent boys over the age of 12.

I was hopeful that we weren't going to have to continue this again, and have more people out on the street. Now I'm going to be one of them because I have chosen to stand up and speak out. There is retaliation that happens with that, many times. Being a minister does not protect you from that. We know that from the people whose footsteps we're walking in.

One of the things we did with Sojourner House, with the Catholic Worker House, was that we have plenty of housing available, we have plenty of buildings that are abandoned – old schools, old factories, other buildings that are still standing but are not in good shape and they are obviously not places where people can live right now. What we did was that when we found that there were places that were not up to code was we got volunteers to put them up to code. We learned how to do a lot of this work ourselves. I didn't know how to do plaster and all of that stuff, and I learned how to do that. When we started Sojourner house, we took half of the Catholic church's rectory because there was only one priest left and his dog, and we then created Sojourner House. We didn't know what we were doing. We were trained and taught to do what we were doing, and we created a shelter

and then we created affordable housing.

I'm somebody who needs affordable accessible housing in a very old city. The only way that I can find it is if it's built because now there is a percentage of units that have to be affordable and have to be accessible and affordable, with a lottery, and that's the only way that I can actually get housing today that I can afford and that I can access. I was very happy and grateful to hear you say that you would be willing to use other funding so that we can't let this sequester have the last word, basically. I will say publically, they are not the Tea Party; we are. They are the tea baggers.

My concern is, when people were standing up and speaking out for their rights, there should not be this retaliation of "Now you're going to be evicted because you're Section 8." Like myself, I was living with rodents, moths, not the necessary smoke alarms, not storm windows, mold – I should bring these up and not be told, "Well, you're a nuisance and, therefore, you've got to be gone because we don't have time for you." I'm not the only one this is happening to; this is happening to women, in particular, who are elderly, senior citizens, and who have disabilities, that "We're too much trouble. Therefore, we just want these young people," or whatever their reasoning is. "We will find a reason so that

you will be gone." But they're not thinking "and be gone where?" To the street. People die in the street. I know because I was in the van that went around and picked people up who were dead in doorways.

This is not something that is mediocre, like "So what?" This is a travesty. This is outrageous. Where is the outrage? It's certainly not in the tea baggers. Our tax dollars are paying for them to have housing, to have health care, to go to the health club, to have a meal in the Congressional cafeteria or whatever they call it. They're all set and so are their families. This is not a kingdom and a monarchy; this is supposed to be a...

MANY: Democracy.

REV EMF: Thank you. This is what democracy looks like. So, I would say put your bodies where your needs are. The more we get out there, the more we speak up, the more that we're not just going to be scared away like, "Oh, okay;" it comes to the point where we all have to stand up and say, "Enough." Look at these precious children that are running around here, because they're, right now, with a bunch of adults that care about them, they're safe here, they're warm here; that won't be the case if they don't have access to a Section 8 voucher and to an affordable housing unit.

Also – let me see if I can remember what I was going to say – Section 8, if the housing authority agrees to it, can provide permanent housing because you can actually buy a home or a unit with your Section 8 voucher if your housing authority agrees to that. Then you go and you get trained on what it is to be a first-time homeowner and you can apply your Section 8 voucher, just like you do for rent, for a mortgage, and they do have people who will help you get a mortgage, like a soft second mortgage, and help you to be actually able to take care of homelessness by having a home that you own and is paid through the Section 8 voucher. It's time for us to really educate ourselves, inform ourselves, inform our neighbors. Don't give up on your Congressional people because we put them there and they have to listen to us; that's their job. We do have some good people. Now we have a new Mayor who seems as though he's willing to listen and hopefully is going to be willing to put his power where we need it, but we have to stand up for ourselves and not let ourselves be discouraged. I heard exactly what you said about hope. This is a really hopeless, overwhelming situation, no two ways about it, but this is not the way that anybody should be treated. The corporations – and actually, corporate is a theological term that means

body; the corpse, one body that's supposed to take care of all of its parts, and that's not what's happening right now. We are not users. We are people. We are citizens and we need to stand up for ourselves and we need to make our elected officials stand up with us and for us and we can't stop. It's not time to sit. It's time to stand and it's time to say, "We matter." Everybody matters. Everybody has a right in this country, in this nation, to live in a home, to come home, not to be on the streets. It's deadly and it's unnecessary. Thank you.

Response: Thank you, Reverend.

Comment: Thank you. Hi, I'm a little [inaudible] in crowds because I'm extremely shy, but I feel the need to speak out tonight.

I've been in the shelter. I know what it is to be homeless. I have an 18 year old daughter and for the most part we lived in [inaudible] House after moving around from a domestic violence situation for about three years. The law did next to nothing. The courts did next to nothing, and I think domestic violence in this society should be taken into consideration way more than what they have been doing. We can't sleep on it. Nobody comes with a caution tag on it. All I know is when we say "hope," we say, "hope for a

change, a positive change." Females or males of any ethnic background, it doesn't matter what our skin pigmentation is, it doesn't matter how poor or how rich, if you love and you are a human being and you want to make a difference in this world, you are rich. It has nothing to do with the might dog.

What I do notice is a lot of people have housing, and they're sitting on Section 8 holding vouchers and they don't deserve it. They have under-the-table jobs. They have more than eight people living with them. They're sitting in the lap of luxury while they're lying while other people are scraping and really need.

CB: I don't think they understand what you're saying. Like, "I've got the Section 8 voucher. I'm charging you \$1,500 to live with me. I'm charging you \$1,500 to live with me, and I'm getting wealth."

HL: That's right.

CB: That's what she's talking about. That's a criminal act, y'all.

HL: It is a criminal act but it's a big huge problem because I feel like everybody else who really does need it is going to miss the opportunity in order to receive it. Why don't we try – and I don't know how, in what kind of sense we could try – to get together to weed out the people who do not need it and

say, "Bye," and make room for the people who really do need it? That's it. That's all I needed to say. I'm a domestic violence survivor. I'm proud. I'm proud to be standing here. I want to make a change. I'll stand up to the world. Let's do this. Let's all do this because I do want to make change, even in society, even through domestic violence, but one person can't do it; it takes a crowd and beyond a crowd. Thank you, everybody.

Response: Thank you, Heather. There are a very small, miniscule percentage of the folks that have our certificates throughout the country that do abuse it, but we should not lose sight of the overwhelming majority of folks that do not.

Comment: I work with Mass Alliance of HUD tenants. I also work with Terry. I did voter registration, as well. I'm part of the 99 percent, not the one percent. I'd like to say I vote all the time. I do voter registration and I work with the city, and I feel we the people, as they say so in Congress, should have the say-so on the one percent and cut their fundings. I don't know how we could go about it, but I'd like to know, if someone can call me or quote me on it. I would like to march, like Mr. Braithwaite mentioned, or like Ms. Celaya mentioned earlier because by us coming out, Congress gets a chance to hear what we have to say. If there is

any way, Mr. McGonagle, you could tell us to cut our taxes so they could feel it in D.C., I would appreciate that as well.

I fall under several categories. I do have a degree, but I have a disability that enables me to not work sometimes because once I fall sick, I have to take time off and your boss doesn't want to hear that. In addition to that, I don't have a Section 8 with BHA, but I do have Section 8. I am a parent of four, and when I can work, I do work. I'm involved in human services and I have been doing that for a number of years in private and public sector, so I care for people and I'm always doing for people.

I'd like to address you, Mr. McGonagle. I know that you didn't give out your number, but if any way possible I could get your number or your business card at the end of this evening, I would appreciate it. Again, like I said, I don't have BHA Section 8, but I would like to know what Congress is doing because I have worked for a number of years, so it's my money which I receive for disability. It's my money which I'm receiving for Section 8. You need to take that into account because I'm steady looking for work. They don't have anything available for people like myself who have college degrees. They're offering minimum wage jobs for folks like us, and minimum wage jobs aren't going to pay off the rent, and if it is, please let me know where

that is so I can move there to places that offer services which I need. Thank you.

Response: the number to call at BHA is 988-4130.

Comment: Before you bring on the next speaker, I just wanted to say something real quick because I've got to get ready to go.

I think it was in Alabama, Martin Luther King already showed you the way. How you give to the people the power was the greatest movement and y'all have been sleeping on it because they thought we weren't going to be able to stay focused on not getting that bus seat. When you hurt someone in their pocket, they've got to listen. What we have to do is effectively attack all of these different companies. This year: Verizon. Next year: this company. When you do not spend your money, they're going to listen. Do you understand what I'm saying? This is real talk right here. That is the only way. I look back on the past, on the story of where we get where we get. The only way this can truly work – one of the ways – is effectively attack their pocket.

You old school people here, you've got to come back to me. You've got to tell me some more knowledge on things that history doesn't dictate to us on paper.

They hid the truth from us. You know what I love about the devil? I'm going to tell you why I love the devil. The devil doesn't separate; it only devours. It's the godly people that want to put their pain on the next man and step on somebody else's shoulders.

This, right now, is the think tank. This is a time when leaders get with leaders and stop the bureaucracy of putting down the next man. Everything you talked about, I foresee it when I was a kid. No elder sat down with me and told me to be the activist I am. We've got to work together and understand what somebody is saying. I understand exactly what this talk is about, but I'm not against voting. I'm with voting, but I'm with going up to that city official that I put in office and saying, "Bro, you didn't do what I told you. And those 30, 40,000 I signed to put you in office? They're going with the next person." Keep doing this. Take the emotion out of it. Think consciously, think spiritually, and you can get anywhere.

I'm a homeboy from Newton with a father that was very wealthy. I walked away from that to understand the walk that my brothers and sisters are going through. I understand your walk, but you don't understand my walk. I speak for everybody. I don't care about none of these officials. You're going to do what I tell you to do with the people backing me up.

Response: Thank you.

Comment: Hi, my name is Pricilla Gardener. I'm a single parent. I'm going blind. They cut off some of the programs for us [inaudible phrase]. I hope our voices will be heard for Congress and I want my Section 8. I still have the program because I do have kids that need it for their future, and housing is not always affordable for everybody. Affordable housing, everybody needs it. [Inaudible phrase]. Thank you. May I say one more thing? Our line item here, folks, for our incoming Mayor, Mayor Walsh; he signed this line item. It's a plan B just in case our federal government cuts the budgets in the springtime. I'm asking him to sign off on it. So, if you have some time this evening, see myself or other people who are walking around with this paper. Thank you, Mr. McGonagle.

Response: Thank you.

Comment: This is nothing new. I've lived in housing for a very long time. I'm on the board [inaudible]. Way back, 30 years ago, they wanted to do away with public housing altogether because the funds were paid off. They tried to get rid of it then. Everyone came together; we won. Everything was good. The only thing was, since then, when this happened, they've had all those years to get their plan down. If they can't attack

you through this way, they're going for this way, okay? Now they are really serious about the way they spend their money.

In Massachusetts, we need more money not less money because all you have to do is walk across the border into Massachusetts and – guess what? – other places have things where you have to live there a year before you're eligible for anything; that doesn't happen here. We have people, and I know a particular case, who was from Connecticut who came up here and ended up in a hotel. We don't need to import more people. We need to take care of what we have first, and that's where we need our money to be put. That is most important. I just hope that when it comes time to vote, when it comes time for you to try to change your politicians, that you all remember that.

This is not a done deal. Like I said, they still want to get rid of housing for people. No matter how long it takes, they're going to try to do it. You need to unite, with that in mind. Thank you.

Response: Thank you.

Comment: My name is Mary Ellen. I'm from Roslyn in Roslindale. I was there 18 years. One thing I did want to bring up is there are some illegal things going on in Roslyn that I think would actually benefit the Reverend here.

There are some people living in the wheelchair accessible apartments that I think could be moved to other places so that people with wheelchairs... I know a friend of mine had to be moved into Brighton, thanks to our city councilor because our manager, that you have to remove, wasn't the greatest. She was unable to access her stove for months. If things were done correctly – the screening process... There are so many people living in units that they don't even need, and there are also people living illegally in units, like four or five to a unit, and are doing things with drugs and other things in the unit that they should also not be doing. We have a good manager in there who is starting to crack down a little bit, but if things could just be done in the right way, I think that would be a way to help protect us a little bit.

We just really need to be safeguarded in the housing, just to have security. I know it's hard to even mention security when we can't even be sure that housing will be protected with funds being cut, but we just need to be sure that we're going to be able to have a home for ourselves and people who really need it.

I know, last year, I was worried about being homeless because of the condition that the manager had me and my husband in. She's been the homeless route so we haven't had it very easy, but thank you for taking the time tonight to

listen to us and please take it seriously. It's just a very hard road, and if you haven't been there, you might not know.

Response: Thank you, Mary Ellen.

Comment: My name is Marshall Cooper. I have been in Dorchester going on 66 years. What I'm going to say now is I'm a member of an organization, City Life, [inaudible phrase], giving people advice after foreclosure to stay in their home. I'm going to tell you about the program. I was getting ready to leave my home. The bank wrote me all kinds of letters and I was afraid. I was even going to sell my furniture. I looked on TV on channel 44. There was a City Life protest, and I took the number down, and guess what? I went there. They actually said, "Mr. Marshall, are you still in your home?" I said, "Yes," and they said, "Stay there," and I'm still in that home. But look here, I don't own that home; the bank owns it. But we have lawyers from Harvard legal aid that help us and give us advice on how to stay in that home. See, when you have the law, there are so many steps you have to go down. I'm still in my home and the bank can't bother me right now. I will tell you all, for Section 8, we have everything [inaudible] to minimum wage. City Life is in everything, so don't leave us out. What I want you to do –

we have meetings every Tuesday, 284 Amory Street. [Inaudible phrase] to learn to stay in your own house, and the lawyer will stand beside you when you go to court, but you've got to want to do it. It ain't like them oranges – you go and take your pick and leave and go about your business; you've got to stand there and get the knowledge with them. Thank y'all very much.

Response: Thank you.

Comment: Hi, my name is Sean [inaudible name]. I think it's time to get some education because I don't think my situation is unique, but I've had some medical problems the last few years and run up some medical bills and my credit's being ruined because they're being sent to collection agencies. I just opened one today from an [inaudible] I had in October that's demanding \$1,227 from me. I don't have that either. I'm being threatened with losing my Section 8. I have a package on my kitchen table that Medicare is cutting me off at the end of this month because I no longer qualify. I don't know how many more hits I can take. I'm bruised on [inaudible] percent of my body.

I came here tonight because I want to learn how I can continue to fight. I know I can't do it alone anymore and I see that there are a lot of people here that are in the fight

and I want to become one of them.

I found out about these cuts from my landlord. He came to me last week and he said to me, "What's going on with your rent?" I said, "Nothing, why?" I hadn't heard about it. He had heard about Section 8 cuts. He said, "I've got to tell you, if Section 8 cuts you, you've got to go." He's telling me that before I even knew there was a problem. I just don't know where to turn anymore. I'm getting hit from every angle. I came here to join the fight.

Response: Thank you.

Comment: I'm just going to take a little time here because I just want to mention that, first of all, everyone feels the same way. We're really grateful to the Boston Housing Authority, the people there, and the things they've done. We're grateful that it exists. I, myself, and very thankful. I am homed, for some years now, because of that.

My aunt, who lives in Boston, she has a daughter that lived in New Orleans. When she came up, she could not live with her mother because her mother was on Section 8 with a one bedroom apartment. It was against the rules and those rules are enforced through the Boston Housing Authority. I wanted to mention that, too. I also wanted to mention that a lot of the policies of the Boston Housing Authority can be too

harsh and penalizing for people, such as the new rule that you can't rent from members of your family or your extended family, which was a way of survival, especially for people of color allowed to live with their extended family. Now you can't rent from your mother, your grandmother, your cousin, your aunt, your nephew, and that's very penalizing. I wanted to mention that, too. Most of those are honest that are renting from this housing. We don't have people living with us to make money off of them. Thank you.

Response: Thank you.

Comment: Good evening. My name is Mae Fripp and I'm from the Committee for Boston Public Housing. You've heard about the Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants and City Life; we're the other agency that has a committee. We have the action committee that is called the Postcard Campaign and we're the group of residents who are writing President Obama and Congress. What we're doing is we're doing a combination of a postcard campaign – paper – and a social media campaign. We're the ones that are asking people to contact everyone on their Facebook, everybody on Twitter, for you to, then, just have everybody you know, everybody you get in contact with, to send a message to fund HUD at 100 percent and have HUD fund the Boston Housing

Authority at 100 percent. That's our message to the President and that's our message to Congress, but we want you to use your social media – everybody on your Facebook, everybody on your Twitter.

For those that want to actually be part of the working group, we're going to be the working group that's meeting every week, every Monday morning and every third Saturday afternoon, to really just get everybody organized so that we can keep up with how many people are being Twittered, how many people are sending out the hits for Facebook.

We also will have a call-in number and a call-in day for all of us to call Congress on the same day. We'll have a BHA day like there was last Monday with the Low-Income Housing Coalition; they all picked one day for everybody across the country to call. We want the same thing. We want to pick one day. We're going to send out a note, so everybody who signed up here, I have the privilege of getting your address and your email and I'll send you a letter. On the letter, it will have all the contact information, all the phone numbers for you to call on the day that we're asking everybody to call in. If you actually want to do some work – if you want to be one of the ones that do the door-to-door hustles, to get out the postcards, to collect petition signatures – then we're the

committee; we're called the Postcard Campaign. You can just sign up with me.

I just wanted to remind people that there was also another committee that you could also sign up for. We just want the people that actually want to work, so we just want people who are actually willing to meet every week and are willing to go knock on doors and get other people. We are asking, in addition to that, that when we send you the letter and the petition, your beauty salon, your barber shop, your corner store, wherever you do business, wherever you pay your taxes, we want you to go to all of those places and we want you to hang our posters and to leave petitions in order for them to get back to us and also so that we can get back to Congress to tell them exactly what we want to happen, since we are the ones that put them there. God bless you.

We're the Committee for Boston Public Housing and we do organizing and advocacy for public housing and Section 8. We've been around since 1981 and we try to make sure that there's always a resident voice to be heard with the Housing Authority.

Response: Thank you.

Comment: I want to talk to the people that control the politicians because it seems like that's where the real power is.

It's the lobbyists. It's the corporations. They are dealing with trillions of dollars and this money that we're talking about tonight, that's just a tiny amount of money. I'm addressing the real power in this country. I'm a little nervous.

Find it in your heart. Don't look at those figures; look to your heart and your soul. When you're looking at those trillions of dollars, they have faces and children, laughter and joy. It's about being human. Don't look at the budget. There's plenty of money. There's more than enough money to go around. You have the will to do this. You find it in your heart to do it because it's the right thing to do. You're dealing with trillions and trillions of dollars. Who do you report to? Lobbyists? Corporations? You're not the one that's in power. We know when we're being lied to, and we're being lied to. Find it in your heart. You have more than the 100 percent funding. We're the richest nation in the world. Housing is a human right. Housing is a human right. The huge amount of numbers that you look at have faces and families attached to them.

Listen to that baby crying; you can't put a price on that.

What you're saying is real and that's a solution. The stories are powerful, and they are beautiful for us to talk about, but we need solutions. We need

solutions to what's happening. What you're saying, it's not politicians, it's the people that are funding the politicians and the people that are putting them into office. What's she saying is true. Give the woman respect and let her say what she's got to say.

At the end of the day, we're all human, aren't we?

MANY: Yes.

FEMALE: What else needs to be said? You find it in your heart to find the money because the money is there and we all know that it is. The money is there. You find it in your heart to get money to these good people.

I'm sorry everybody. I just wanted to add one small point. If it weren't for each and every one of us, BHA would not be employed, HUD would not be employed, [inaudible] would not be employed, [inaudible] Residential would not be employed. Actually, in all reality, they need everyone like us.

Response: Thank you.

Comment: Hi, I'm Mac from Greater Boston Legal Services. I'm not going to say the stuff that I said this morning; the BHA will get my written comments.

What I wanted to mention was it was incredible last week that 400 people showed up for the two public hearings at Roxbury Community College. It is scandalous that HUD is taking back \$350,000 from the BHA's [inaudible speaking, simultaneous applause] Section 8 program. There needs to be a big speech about how that money is needed by the BHA and HUD should not do that. If we get through this immediate crisis, there is still a rolling crisis going on that a number of you are going to be facing next year. As Bill mentioned earlier, it's very important that people pay attention to both public housing and Section 8. It's been really powerful that the coalitions have gotten together – the public housing residents and the Section 8 residents – but we need to continue to stay together. BHA had to do a bunch of cost-saving measures this year just to be able to not cut off people this year and people are going to see those effects next year because BHA's had to cut its subsidy level from 105 to 110 percent of the fair market level to 100 percent, which means that, starting next spring, people's landlords are going to get paid less by the BHA on subsidy and that means that many people are going to face the kind of increases that Robin was talking about earlier with her landlord. So, there needs to be some strategy about that, about the big and small and all those

other things that Bill was talking about earlier, about ways to influence this equation so that people aren't displaced and so that we can all stay together as a strong Boston community. Thank you.

Response: Thank you.

Comment: I just have to say something because ever since I heard about this, I've been so concerned and worried and it makes me feel like D-Day is coming. When I go to my mailbox, I have that impending doom. Is that letter going to be there for me? Am I going to be homeless with my kid? It's no way to live. That's a basic need: food, clothes, and shelter. Why should I worry about something that's a basic need that my community and my government should provide for me?

I've worked and I've been on Section 8 and I've never had no problems with my Section 8. I've never been any kind of reprimanded or anything, but I still have this impending doom because I hear about this situation and I worry. Am I going to be in the street? What am I going to do with my kid? Do I have to live on the street with my children? I think it's just so heartless for this United States to do this to people who don't deserve it.

Response: Thank you.

Comment: I'm Michael Kane from Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants. This morning and tonight, this has been very powerful to hear from people. This morning there were a lot of people who are homeless now who can't get a voucher because there are no new vouchers already. That was even before the cuts, there are thousands of people who were homeless. A lot of people who have vouchers or are in public housing were homeless and they don't want to be homeless again and they shouldn't be homeless again. What we have to do is unite and fight to make sure there are no cuts, whatsoever, to Section 8, to public housing, to restore the money, and to go after the people that have the money. We go after the people that have the money.

We've been fighting these cuts for about 10 years. This is our organization. We represent tenants. We're a tenant union in privately-owned, HUD-subsidized housing developments like Warren Hall, [inaudible], or High Point Village which is now Stony Brook Commons in Roslindale. That's our base. We work with our sister organizations like Committee for Public Housing in public housing – we don't represent public housing tenants – and groups who are like City Life who organize in private housing without the government subsidies. It's a very powerful coalition that has

come together in the Save Our Section 8 Coalition. We're glad to be part of that.

Over the last decade, when there have been cuts, we were able to stop them, pretty much, by forming alliances across the country through the National Alliance of HUD Tenants, which we're part of, and it worked. Two years ago, we managed to mobilize; on Valentine's Day, we go Scott Brown to support full funding for rental housing. With enough Republican support, they actually did it for two years in Washington. Two years ago, when they passed the Budget Control Act and the Republican crazies and extremists who have taken over the House said they were going to shut down the government and force the United States into default unless there were cuts only for a phony crisis that doesn't really exist – they call it the deficit crisis. There is a deficit problem; it's because Bush cut taxes to the rich and started two wars that weren't funded. That's why there's a deficit problem. Now they're trying to make us pay for it by cutting all the programs that we need.

We realized, two years ago, that this is much bigger than just tenants. This is much bigger than just our organization, or public housing, or vouchers. This is affecting everybody. It's affecting Head Start, parents. It affects Meals on Wheels, Social Security. My retirement plan is Social

Security. They're talking about cutting Social Security and Medicare. That's what they're going after. They're going after everything that we need and rely on that we fought for and we pay for. We have to form a broader coalition, that's what we realized.

A couple years ago, we formed alliances with trade unions like the government workers, because they were cut terribly. BHA has laid off 38 [inaudible]. We formed an alliance with the HUD workers because they have been slashed. We formed alliances with the peace groups. I'm actually thrilled tonight that so many people were touching on the message that we've been trying to get out that we have to prevent any cuts, we've got to invest in jobs, we've got to tax the rich, tax the one percent, close corporate loopholes, and cut the military. Concetta talked about the planes that don't fly. One and a half trillion dollars for the F-35; it doesn't fly. It has contractors in 47 states, so that's what that's about. We have to form an alliance and cut these wasteful programs, get out of the two wars. We're almost out of both now, but we're out of one anyway, more or less, but we still have to get out of Afghanistan and forget about the future troops there that they're talking about. We've got a lot of other things to do, but we need a broader movement and coalition.

There is a coalition, it's called the Budget for More Coalition, that we're a part of that Terry spoke to back in February. Everybody here, I'm sure, voted for the referendum last fall that was on the ballot: no more cuts, tax the one percent, end the wars, and invest in jobs. Since then, there is a coalition that has been doing actions; there have been eight of them in the last year. We mobilized them when the sequester kicked in. We had a hearing at the State House; packed the State House. There is a resolution out there. We need to get on their case because they're sitting on that resolution. It would help a lot if the State House would pass that resolution. When Republicans try to shut down the government again, and they actually did, we did an action at the Republican state headquarters right over here on Merrimack Street. When they were going to go into default two weeks later, we went back again, so we did two hits on them. We brought in these corporations who are not paying their fare share. We marched on Verizon. We marched on Citigroup. We marched on Bank of America. It's been working. We've been getting our message out as a coalition. We need more groups and more allies in that. So many people are here tonight from other constituencies that are wanting to get involved and they're hungry to get involved.

I'm speaking now on behalf of the Save Our Section 8 Coalition. That's another effort to bring the housing groups together. There, we've gotten commitment from the Mayor that if Washington doesn't come through – next month, we're talking about – the Mayor said he would introduce a line item in the city budget to make up the difference, \$13 million. Amanda does remind me of something I wanted to ask Mr. McGonagle: if the \$13 million is restored even by Washington or by the city, would the BHA be able to go back to the payment standard of 110 percent and not force tenants to pay more next spring?

Because that's what we're fighting for, and if we need to fight for more money, let us know and we'll go to the city for more.

Okay, that's great.

Our principle is no more cuts. We need to restore the cuts that have been made. Poor people should not be taking the brunt of the deficit crisis – the phony deficit crisis – that was created by the one percent and the military contractors to line their own pockets. We should not be made to pay for that. We need to go after them, [inaudible phrase, simultaneous applause]. There is \$100 billion dollars, every year, that big corporations do not pay. Apple

Computer made \$74 billion in profits last year. They owe \$9 billion to this country for the taxes they didn't pay. \$9 billion would solve this problem. It would solve the food stamp cut. It would solve the education cut. It would solve the Head Start cut, just from that one corporation. If Verizon had paid, if Bank of America paid; there's about 20 of them, so \$100 billion. That would completely replace the sequester and then we would have money for jobs. This is pretty simple, at that level. They could cut the military wasteful contractors like the F-35 and that would go a long way, too.

There are answers. We need to be mobilizing and putting pressure, even on the democrats. Our delegation has been pretty good. Elizabeth Warren, actually, has been a national leader, as has Capuano on these issues. One of the reasons we keep organizing these actions is they need to see that so that they go down and know that we've got their back; it makes them fight a little harder. They can point to it and say, "People are out on the street in my district; we've got to do this." We understand that we're in Massachusetts. We've got to reach out to people in other parts of the country, too. We need to be building this movement.

There are three committees that the Save Our Section 8 Coalition has put

together. One of them is on the city line item budget – the Mayor's commitment. We need to be following up on that. If you haven't signed up for that committee, please do. We're going to be contacting you about a meeting around that. The Mayor is going to have a housing task force. They haven't scheduled it yet, but we need to be there. Everybody needs to be there and remind the Mayor of this commitment and thank him for it and make sure they do it because there are a lot of other pressures on the city budget; a lot of other pressures and they're all important. We need to make sure that housing is a line item in the budget. The Mayor says he supports a line item for the arts; that's a good thing, but if there's a line item for the arts, there needs to be a line item for housing, too. If the feds restore the money, it would be good to have one half of one percent for housing because then it could go to public housing and it could go to new housing. New housing needs to be built. \$13 million goes a long way, but... Please sign up for this committee. We're going to be figuring out strategies and actions. If you hear about a protest at Apple Computer on Saturday, the 21st, you might want to drop by.

Response: BM: I've got to see the numbers before I make any kind of commitment like that. I don't know.

I think that by the end of the week we'll have a better sense and we'll sit down with our budget people and we'll see. The last thing I want to do is displace people. The second thing I don't want to do is to raise people's rents. Raising rents, from my perspective, is a better alternative to tossing people out. Somebody said this evening, very appropriately, "A leaky roof is better than no roof." Paying a little more rent is better than no apartment, but we'll see what they do. If there is any way humanly possible within the confines of my budget to not do that, I will not do that. Thanks, Michael.

Comment: I would just like to say one thing, if I could please have the microphone. Thank you.

I just wanted to let you know, for those of you who use the Internet, to go on PBS with Bill Moyers. He just had a program about lobbyists who used to be in Congress. Even the people who said that they weren't going to do that, like Chris Dodd and other people who said that they were not going to lobby when came out, that is what they have done. We need to remind the lobbyists who they used to represent and who used to pay their salary.

Response: Thank you.

Budget:

Comment: AP pp. 6-7: As usual, although it's good to see there is no requirement for mandatory conversion of public housing to Section 8, it is eye-opening to see the discrepancy between average costs for the two programs.

Response: Agreed.

Comment: S p. 14, Financial Resources: It would be helpful to have information comparing these numbers with those in prior years. (This could be included in BHA's response to comments on the Plan.)

Response: A comparison of last year with this year is available in the Planning Library.

Capital:

Comment: AP pp. 12-13: It would be helpful to explain in narrative form somewhere—and the HUD template doesn't lend itself to this—what the BHA has told the RAB, i.e., it is only doing an update to next year's Annual Capital Plan for expenditures, rather than revisions to the rolling 5-year plan, given that the whole Physical Needs Assessment (PNA) system for HUD is in flux and has not yet been rolled out.

Response: Good idea. We will add that explanation to the Annual Plan template along with additional information regarding CFP submissions to HUD as found in the new Final Rule for the Capital Fund Program.

Comment: PR pp. 10-11, Capital Fund Program:

As noted above (n. *), HUD has recently issued a final regulation revising its Capital Fund Program and limiting the funds available for management improvements, for administration, and Operating expenses. The rule also changes how Replacement Housing Factor (RHF) funds are provided. BHA should address, somewhere in its response to comment, how these changes are anticipated to affect its programs and the completion of certain capital and redevelopment initiatives, as well as the carrying out of basic operations and management functions.

Response: With regard to RHF funding, BHA will continue to receive RHF funds based on units removed from BHA's inventory prior to June 30, 2012; in addition, we anticipate receiving future allocations of the new Demolition and Disposition Transitional Funding based both on units that may be removed in the future as well as based on units that have already been removed from the

BHA's inventory and have already qualified for first increment RHF funds (and which would have been eligible for second increment RHF funding). BHA's current intention is to apply all such funding (continued RHF plus future DDTF funding) to support public housing redevelopment projects. At this time BHA plans to use such available funding to support the redevelopment work at Old Colony.

The new rule does not impact the amount of CFP funds that can be used as a Capital Fund Program fee. The allowable fee amount is still 10% of the formula grant amount. In addition, the new rule does not impact the amount of funds that can be used for operating costs. This amount is still 20% of the annual Capital Fund grant.

The new rule does place additional restrictions on MIP funds that can be used for Social Services and Public Safety. Previous to the new rule we are using very little MIP funds for these purposes, although we were budgeting them for contingency. We believe we will still be able to carry out the basic operations and management functions of the Authority under the new rule.

Comment: PR pp. 10-11, Capital Fund Program: The Capital Fund rule also finalizes how HUD will handle shortfalls in funding that may affect mixed

finance developments—what was euphemistically referred to as “transformation remedies”, but means that the private partner can admit higher income tenants or change the rent structure to make up for shortfalls. Hopefully the pro-rata in Operating Subsidy hasn’t gotten to the point of affecting financial feasibility of older HOPE VI sites (like Mission Main, Orchard, Maverick, etc.) but worth getting BHA’s current thinking on this in response to comments.

Response: There has been no discussion with owners at the Mixed Finance sites about entering into any “transformation remedies”. There are healthy reserves at all of these properties to mitigate against the need for transformation remedies.

Comment: PR pp. 10-11, Capital Fund Program: p. 11, Energy Performance Contracts: Can BHA describe further what these Variable Frequency Drives do (at Charlestown)?

Response: Effectively, Variable Frequency Drives are an electrical device that controls the operating speed of motors, drives, and pumps based on the load requirements. In the case of Charlestown, they are tied to the hot water heating system circulatory pumps. Generally, motors are sized based on the largest potential load that system may need, in practice

the actual daily load may only require a fraction of the horse power to maintain the system specifications. Operating the motor based on the load vs. simply on full power all the time provides significant electrical savings over the long term operating profile.

Civil Rights:

Comment: S p. 33: It appears that the number of Resident Employment Positions is decreasing—is this due to diminished Capital Grant and HOPE VI funds as projects completed and newer funds are more limited?

Response: The number of new hiring opportunities decreased significantly during the calendar year 2012 due to diminished ARRA and Capital Grant funds and the completion of HOPE VI projects at Washington Beech and Old Colony, Phase I, Developments in 2011.

Comment: Four-Factor Analysis for Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Section C.1.B and C.3.B-4 (pp. 2 and 5-6): “Vital documents” includes notices of adverse action to applicants, public housing tenants, and Section 8 participants (such as denial of admission, action on transfer requests, evictions, and terminations of assistance). Translation of such adverse

action notices would include the details about why BHA has decided to act adversely to an applicant or tenant; this information, however, is not yet provided by the BHA. BHA must continue to take action to implement this.

It should also be noted, in Section C.1.B, that while written translation into Arabic may be sufficient for all Arabic communicators (as with Chinese), there are a number of dialects which would require different interpreter services. For example, an Arab speaker from Morocco may not understand an interpreter from Lebanon. Our understanding is that BHA’s program is aware of these differences and makes arrangements, but it is important to note this.

Section C.2 (pp. 2-4): The discussion about the frequency of LEP contacts does NOT discuss how LEP needs are addressed in privately managed and Mixed Finance sites, and this should be added.

Moreover, the description of what the Legal Department does is not complete, since court matters also involve judicial review of BHA Section 8 termination decisions or other administrative action for applicants and participants.

Section 3 (pp. 4-6): It’s not clear from the narrative how/when interpreter and translation services are provided for residents at Mixed

Finance or privately managed sites. In addition, whenever BHA receives a request for reasonable accommodation from a person who is identified as LEP, it should not solely rely on subsequent written communications in English for the interactive process, but should either engage in the interactive process through use of an interpreter and/or make sure that the written requests for follow-up documents are in the participant's primary language. Otherwise, there is a danger that the reasonable accommodation request will be denied due to lack of response which was solely related to LEP.

Section C.4 (p. 6): Would revise the 2nd bullet to read "termination of tenancy or rental assistance hearings", since both public housing eviction and Section 8 termination hearings may be involved.

Response: BHA's LEP policy is applicable to Mixed Finance and privately managed developments, and site offices of the said developments are to provide a Language Advisory with their official notices, oral interpretation upon request from persons accessing site services, and written translation of vital documents in Spanish and/or Chinese. For written translation, site offices of Mixed Finance and privately managed developments may ob

tain from BHA's Regional Management staff many of the document templates that are already translated into Spanish and Chinese. For 2014 the BHA Language Access Division will work closely with the Regional 4 Management to a) provide development site staff with LEP related training/refreshers, b) assist the latter in identifying language resources, and to c) address site-based LEP concerns.

Since the Reasonable Accommodation Coordinator and the staff of Language Access are part of the Office of Civil Rights and situated in close proximity, both staff collaborate frequently and have been able to provide language assistance to LEP persons requesting reasonable accommodation.

In light of the linguistically diverse population (30 languages spoken at home) it serves, BHA is committed to providing oral interpretation service in any requested language despite the current fiscal challenges. BHA also continues to provide written translation of generic vital documents in Spanish and Chinese. Translating documents into additional languages and translating notices with individualized content will have to be a long term goal.

Comment: PR pp.4-9 The Language Access piece here is

very impressive, particularly given the fiscal challenges BHA has been facing. Would be helpful to know how Limited English Proficiency (LEP) issues are addressed in the Mixed Finance sites that BHA is less directly involved in, but which are still part of BHA's overall responsibilities. In addition, there is still the long-term goal of making sure that where applicants and tenants get "adverse action" notices (transfer, termination, eviction, etc.), these are "vital documents" and that the details as to why BHA did what it did are spelled out in primary languages other than English. In addition, if a person makes a reasonable accommodation request and it is clear that English is not their primary language, follow up inquiries should be translated.

Response: See above response.

Communications:

Comment: PR pp. 9-10, Continue to improve customer service in all areas such that the BHA is consistently experienced internally as an efficient, pleasant, and responsive organization:

It should be noted that the website redesign and implementation has been taking longer (in part due to funding

challenges), but there should be projected dates for implementation in the Progress Report.

Response: While the website has been taking much longer than originally projected due to funding/staffing challenges, it is moving along and has remained a very high priority for both the Directors of Communications and Public Affairs and of MIS. It has been determined that there is a need for some copywriter/content management assistance to get the last portion of the content prepared for the site to go live. The anticipated date of implementation is two months after we are able to identify and bring such a person on board. That effort is underway now but is not yet complete.

The redesigned website will include a number of features and tools to enhance customers' experience.

- Clearer presentation of information;
- More timely updates of time-sensitive data;
- Better information on programs and housing options;
- Tools to allow landlords to list, and interested shoppers to search for, up-to-date apartment vacancies;

- Tools to help applicants evaluate their qualifications for various housing programs;
- On-line job applications;

Over the course of 2014, the BHA hopes to implement even more interactive features, including:

- A landlord "portal", through which landlords will be able to instantly get access to their personal payment information, inspections information, and tenant information;
- A resident "portal" through which voucher holders and residents can prepare for their annual recertification meetings.

Community Services:

Comment: PR pp. 1-4, Invest in resident capacity building and self-sufficiency initiatives to the greatest extent feasible: This is a good summary of the great progress over the past year and this is an area in which BHA should be justifiably proud. A few points, thought:

This makes it appear as if we're done with the Navigating the

BHA materials. While there's been progress, we're not there yet. Hopefully this will be complete by 4/1/14.

Response: Thank you; we will continue to work on both resident capacity building and self-sufficiency initiatives.

Comment: There should be a discussion somewhere in the Progress Report (here or elsewhere) about the loss of the resident coordinator positions in elderly/disabled housing, due to reduced public housing funding, and what steps and collaborations BHA has taken to ensure that residents still can get access to appropriate services and interventions when needed to stabilize tenancies.

Response: A committee, jointly led by the BHA and the Commission of the Affairs of the Elderly, was convened under the former mayor. The committee researched best practices and service delivery models to fulfill its charge to make recommendations for restructuring BHA's resident services program in the elderly/disabled housing. The recommendations are forthcoming. In the interim wherever possible, the BHA has continued the established service relationships. The BHA continues to work with key service providers and advocate groups on a short term plan to encourage new relationships and to grant more access to service providers.

In addition in 2014, BHA will be conducting a survey of all elderly/disabled public housing residents with the goal to identify residents with unmet service needs and connect them with our community partners.

Comment: PR A problem may have arisen recently with ensuring that all recognized LTOs can obtain internet service. BHA's Tenant Participation Policy does provide that BHA will arrange for free office space and a telephone line for LTOs, but there are no similar guarantees for internet service. Tenant participation funding (TPF) can be used by an LTO to pay for this, but some LTOs may have counted on informal courtesy arrangements in the past which have lapsed. There should be a standard policy on this for all LTOs in both regular BHA sites and Mixed Finance or privately managed housing. Even if BHA does not pay for internet service, it should help LTOs know what steps they need to go through to establish service, particularly if they relied on past arrangements which have lapsed.

Response: This proposal around a consistent approach for the access of internet service makes good sense. BHA will include this issue when it negotiates a new agreement with Comcast.

Comment: PR There should be guarantees for both LTO office space and community space at all developments with public housing units (including Mixed Finance and privately managed sites), and the space should be available for resident meetings. This has continued to be an issue at the Franklin Hill site.

Response: It is my understanding that BHA makes every effort to provide space at each of our sites for both LTOs and community meetings though in some cases we need to access other nearby community space as there is none available on-site.

Comment: PR pp. 21-24, Regarding the response to the social needs of residents: As noted above, there should be reference to the decision to terminate certain resident service coordinator positions due to insufficient funding, and a rethinking of coordination/collaboration strategies. This should be included here or elsewhere in the report, and there should be some discussion about the challenges and thinking about how to best meet these needs in a time of diminished resources.

Wherever possible, here and elsewhere in the Progress Report it should be made clear either what services are also available for Section 8 participants or what efforts BHA is making to try to get services for the bulk of those participants who are not in FSS programs.

Response: CSD will continue to make available as many of its initiatives and partner agreements as possible for the benefit of both public housing and Section 8 residents. In our updating of the BHA website CSD services & programs will highlight that aspect.

Grievance:

Comment: S On p. 27, Public Housing Grievance Procedures and Section 8 Informal Hearings, it should be noted that at a number of Mixed Finance sites, there are unique local grievance procedures which can be obtained from the private management company. It would be best if these could also be compiled and available centrally, and these policies should be reviewed for consistency and to see if they are working well. (BHA is starting a process to review its grievance and informal hearing process to determine if changes are needed, but no formal changes are being proposed yet for review and comment.)

Response: BHA will take the comment under consideration. It makes good sense to have a central place where grievance policies can be reviewed. Perhaps when the new website is launched this information could be housed there.

Comment: Hearing Improvements and Timely Processing of Tenant Selection Appeals:

In the mid-1990's, BHA had developed a huge backlog of applicant appeals, and it was taking over a year for hearings to be held and for decisions to be issued. GBLS sued BHA about this, and the Superior Court entered a consent decree that BHA had to meet certain time standards for holding hearings and issuing decisions. BHA both had to tackle a backlog of unresolved appeals and ensure that future cases were handled promptly. It took BHA a number of years before its performance reached the level of "substantial compliance" (90% or more of cases being heard and decided within the time standards) such that detailed reporting requirements would cease. Recently, the time to hear and decide cases has grown. The problem, while not as severe as it was in the mid-1990's, is getting to a level of a due process concern (i.e., that cases be decided "within a meaningful time"). Steps should be taken to avoid litigation and ensure that applicants are well served. GBLS also provided the BHA last year with a major set of questions about the appeals and grievance process and how there could be simplification and reforms (particularly for Mixed Finance sites). BHA has indicated some interest in these issues, but discussions have

not yet begun. Hopefully there will be progress to report on this front in 2014.

Response: The Authority shares the commenter's concerns about timely processing of applicant appeal hearings. Despite unprecedented funding pressures, the BHA added interns to assist in processing hearings and held the Department of Grievances and Appeals (DGA) harmless in a recent reduction in force in order to maintain its full complement of Hearing Officers. The number of decisions issued by DGA through diligent efforts has increased by almost 40% from 2010 to 2013. However for the same 2010 to 2013 period, Sec. 8 participant appeals have increased by 60%, Sec. 8 applicant appeals have increased by 4%, and Public Housing applicant appeals increased by 33%. DGA staff are tasked to address all these areas. Emphasis was given in 2013 to Sec. 8 participant appeals to help address sequestration funding shortfalls in the Leased Housing Program. The BHA will continue to closely monitor Sec. 8 and Public Housing applicant appeals with a view to keeping a manageable backlog despite the extremely pressing financial environment.

The BHA will be happy to meet in 2014 with GBLS to discuss

its ideas for reforms and simplification of the process.

Leased Housing:

Comment: AP pp. 8-10: It appears that there are no changes in the Section 8 homeownership program; presumably BHA can confirm that.

Response: There are no changes in the Homeownership program at this time.

Comment: AP pp. 11-12: As discussed below regarding the 5-Year Progress Report, presumably BHA will not be putting out any new PBV units since April 1, 2013 unless an Agreement to enter into a Housing Assistance Payment Contract (AHAP) was already executed, given the need to limit new commitments as long as there is a Section 8 shortfall. It would be helpful to confirm this, as well as whether any AHAPs were executed prior to April 1, 2013 and how many units and what locations are involved.

Response: There have been no AHAPs executed since April 1, 2013. Prior to April 1, 2013 there were AHAPs for 7 projects for a total of 75 units.

Comment: AP pp. 15-17: As has been noted in the past, there appear to be some disparities between general Boston demographics (see prior chart) and those on the Section 8 waiting list—for example, the number of Asian families is significantly less. To the extent that this is a product of Priority 1 definitions, a review of that at some point is worth consideration. (Obviously the data would need to be fine-tuned given that the Section 8 program is intended to be heavily targeted to those with incomes of 30% of area median income and below, and the demographic information may be different than in the prior charts. It should also be noted that the description of what waiting lists are open for Section 8, to the extent it reflects PBV mobility or Super-Priority does not reflect current circumstances given the funding cuts and criteria for receipt of shortfall funding.

Response: Thank you for your comment and Leased Housing will take it under consideration.

Comment: AP pp. 19-23: Under strategies for addressing needs, it may be helpful to add information about how current funding reductions on public housing and Section 8 have affected BHA's ability to carry out these strategies. Under affirmatively furthering fair housing, BHA may want to look at whether the Priority 1

definition used for the Section 8 program or other factors inadvertently are having any disparate impact on the housing opportunities of particular groups, and propose future changes to address this (see discussion of the charts on housing needs, above).

Response: Thank you for your comment and Leased Housing will take it under consideration.

Comment: AP pp. 23-24: Significant Amendments should also include any policies (or changes in policies) affecting termination of assistance to Section 8 participants due to insufficient funding, as well as waiver requests needed for cost savings to avoid termination.

Response: Thank you for your comment and Leased Housing will take it into consideration.

Comment: S pp. 10-13: Section 8 admissions issues:

To the extent that sequestration and shortfall funding criteria (to get additional funds to avoid termination of assistance to Section 8 participants) means that BHA is not issuing vouchers to Priority 1 applicants except for certain programs like VASH, and PBV turn-over units, this information should be added here. Obviously that may change over the year if the funding situation improves so that BHA can issue new vouchers, allow PBV

participants mobility vouchers, and allow Super-priority.

On p. 12, the working preference (and the exceptions to it) are written in a way that it would appear to just apply to single individuals. This is not true—if the head of household is elderly or disabled, and cannot work for that reason, it should qualify for the exception to working preference even if there are more persons in the household than the head and spouse (such as minor children). BHA has had some recent discussions with the Disability Law Center on this and has worked that out, but the text here may cause problems, and should be revised.

BHA may also want to add language here, as it has in the proposed Administrative Plan amendment, that applicants who qualify for Special Purpose vouchers which are under the thresholds set for utilization by funding grants may skip over applicants on the waiting list until BHA can meet its commitments for these vouchers.

Response: On S pp10-13, the Admission preferences have not changed. The working Families preference as defined in the Administrative Plan is language adopted from the Code of Federal Regulations (24CFR 982.207(b)). Leased Housing will add language to the Supplement regarding

Special Purpose Vouchers as in the Administrative Plan.

Comment: S pp. 18-19, Section 8 rents: It should be noted that this has been revised from last year's PHA Plan to reflect the cost-savings measures BHA had to implement mid-year to address funding shortfalls. It would obviously be desirable for BHA to set payment standards higher than 100% of FMR to reduce participants' rent burdens and increase the likelihood of success in finding housing in a tight market, but this is simply not economically feasible given the reduced resources BHA has and the continued threat of possible termination of assistance to families due to insufficient funds. The provision on minimum rents here should be revised to note that while BHA has added provisions to its Administrative Plan allowing it to implement minimum rents, it has chosen not to do so yet, as it does not appear that this would result in significant cost savings, it would burden the poorest of the poor, and it carries with it a number of administrative costs.

Response: On S pp 19 2a The Minimum rent has been identified as \$0.

Comment: PR Is there an updated Section 8 Management Assessment Program (SEMAP score--last one referenced here is from 2011)? Note likely challenges here in maintaining

good score and at the same time being able to live within reduced budget due to federal sequestration.

Response: Thank you for your comment, the Progress Report will be updated accordingly.

Comment: PR pp.4-9 Did the internet portals for landlords get set up, or is this delayed like other website updates (and affected by the funding cuts)?

Response: The BHA hopes to implement Landlord and Resident Portals during 2014. This implementation was delayed both by the challenges in completing the design and content of the website, and by the Portal vendor, who was required by the BHA to complete outstanding custom programming for the BHA's general operation prior to moving forward with the portal implementation. This custom programming is scheduled for implementation in the first weeks of 2014, and the BHA expects to move forward shortly with the configuration and implementation of the portals.

Comment: PR There have begun to be some collaboration between homeless prevention and broader resident education initiatives. BRTI and Homestart did a joint training on public housing rents with BHA's assistance, and S8TI would be interested in some similar on Section 8 side. Similar collaboration to highlight the

negative effects of budget cuts on homeless/at-risk populations as well as public housing and Section 8 residents will be key to getting the message out about the need for adequate funding.

Response: Leased Housing is always interested in collaborative opportunities with our partners on issues regarding housing and budget issues.

Comment: pp. 16-17, Create and Preserve Affordable Housing (under Leased Housing):

Obviously all of this has been affected by sequestration and federal funding reductions. It's not clear if all of these PBV commitments could be met, since a condition of the shortfall funding was that BHA make no new commitments (no entry into new AHAPs) after April 1, 2013. Moreover, funds set aside for PBV directly cut into the funds available for existing HCVF participants. While failure to reissue vouchers and/or develop new housing clearly has a negative impact on housing opportunities, BHA must prioritize taking all steps necessary to avoid terminating existing families due to insufficient funds.

Response: Thank you for your comment and understanding of the difficult choices that must be made in the wake of funding cuts.

Comment: PR pp. 16-17 For those who are not familiar with the program, an explanation of Enhanced Vouchers (EVs) would be helpful. BHA gets these in order to replace subsidies lost from multifamily owners not renewing their subsidies with HUD, or allowing low-income use restrictions to expire. It would be preferable whenever possible to have the contracts be renewed, since units are lost to the private market upon turnover at those sites. They are called Enhanced Vouchers because they can pay higher (market) rents at the converted federal properties, but rents revert to normal levels if tenants relocate. While EVs may result in additions to BHA's portfolio, they do not result in more affordable units in Boston. BHA should check whether the vouchers at Warren Hall are Enhanced Vouchers and not Tenant Protection Vouchers.

Response: Warren Hall vouchers were Tenant Protection Vouchers.

Comment: PR pp. 17-19, Decrease homelessness in the City of Boston: Here again, it should be noted what the impact is of reduced federal funding and sequestration on the provision of affordable housing to applicants. BHA has had to freeze issuance of vouchers, and in fact rescinded vouchers to those with SAMHSA vouchers issued after April 1. The recent report to

Mayor Menino on homeless strategies by the Regional Leadership Network, and how this may affect BHA's strategy for the remainder of the 5-year plan, should be outlined here. This may also include homeless prevention strategies to avoid homelessness for public housing residents and for Section 8 households and to avoid creation of homelessness through the termination of subsidy due to insufficient funding.

Response: Leased Housing will review and revise accordingly

Comment: PR pp. 19-21: It appears that the Customer Service and High Performer Status are repeats of what's earlier in the report, and some streamlining could be done. Without a careful look, it appears the same may be for what's reported on resident services here and earlier in the report.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

Comment: As we were going through tenant selection in the Supplement, a question was raised: If Section 8 tenants are terminated due to lack of funding, is there any ability to give them BHA public housing? Previously BHA had granted a super-priority for Section 8 for public housing residents who needed to relocate for safety, reasonable accommodation, or humanitarian needs where their

needs could not be properly met within the public housing portfolio. While that priority still exists on paper, given the Section 8 cuts/freezes, this isn't a current option. But could something like this be created for Section 8 tenants at risk of homelessness because they're getting cut off? John said this is worth considering, but given that BHA's Occupancy Rate is very high (something that's critical to performance), there are only a limited number of units available. In addition, Mac noted that the screening process for public housing and Section 8 are different (it's more limited for Section 8, as the private owner does most of the screening), and there might be some screening required.

Response: Thank you for your comment. The BHA will take your suggestion into consideration.

Legal:

Comment: S pp. 42-52, VAWA Policy:

It's good to see the addition of "sexual assault" victims throughout, as required by changes to the VAWA statute by Congress in 2013. As noted in comments below, BHA needs to put these changes in the Section 8 Administrative Plan in the way it has done for the

proposed changes to the ACOP.

As noted above, BHA needs to implement the bifurcated lease, and also insure that notices of adverse action (eviction, termination of assistance, denial of admission) also advise applicants/tenants/participants of VAWA rights.

Response: Thank you for your comment. The BHA agrees that the VAWA language in its Administrative Plan needs to be revised to conform to changes in the 2013 VAWA reauthorization. Ideally this will be done at the time of the next Administrative Plan revision. Revisions to the BHA lease and notices of adverse actions will be undertaken in due course, as may be appropriate.

Comment: Community Space Use Policy

It had been suggested last year that this policy should go through the Resident Empowerment Coalition (REC) for a longer vetting process, and it's not clear whether and what meetings have occurred with local tenant organizations (LTOs) regarding the policy. There are a number of questions or concerns here:

It's not clear if this policy applies to Mixed Finance developments and, if so, to what extent approvals go through BHA and to what extent the private partners who are

operating the development day to day.

The terms "Resident Council", "Task Force", and "Resident Organization" are used in ways which are not clear. If the intent is to cover what would be called "Local Tenant Organizations" under BHA's Local Tenant Participation Policy, the policy should say so. There would then be the question of how other resident organizations are treated—for example, the Resident Advisory Board and its committees? Section 8 Tenants, Inc.? The Resident Empowerment Coalition?

In the first section, and elsewhere, there is reference to tenants seeking to use committee areas of spaces needing to be "a resident of the building". However, there may be developments which have a number of buildings, but limited community spaces. Residents should not lose rights just because they don't live in the particular building in their development that's involved. See also Section 3.K.

In the fourth paragraph of the first section, there is reference solely to exterior common areas. However, the danger of "captive audience" is not limited to "exterior areas". It would probably make sense to delete the word "exterior", or to say "exterior and interior". In the 4th line of this paragraph, the word "are" should be deleted between "and" and "not

deemed" (otherwise, it is not clear what the prior reference is).

In the 2nd section, Mission Statement, last paragraph, and elsewhere where the term "exclusive" is used, it may be helpful to spell out that this is for a set time period or periods. An Authorized User, Repeat User, or Resident Organization should never had exclusive use of a community space, but only exclusive use for a particular time period (or scheduled time periods).

In the 3rd section, definitions, 3.B., Community Equipment, what if the equipment was purchased by the Local Tenant Organization, RAB, REC, S8TI, etc.? Similarly, would Paragraph 6A bar storage of RAB, REC, etc. equipment in a community room at a development like Amory Street or Bromley-Heath? (Obviously it would make sense for such non-BHA material to be secured. For example, it might be that the RAB microphone could be kept in the Community Services Department space.)

In Section 7, Code of Conduct, the reference here should be to the BHA standard residential lease (or, if this covers Mixed Finance sites, such permutations from that lease as are used there); otherwise, the term "lease" might be deemed to apply to a rental of the community space. On subsection C, what if the tenant

invited a service organization (say GBLS, MSAC, or CBPH) to come to the site, but was ill on the day of the presentation? On subsection G, the term “offensive” may be subject to a number of interpretations. For example, there might be a presentation on a valid issue of community concern but someone’s sensibilities are offended (for example, showing how ACT-UP dramatized the need for services to respond to AIDS, or how immigrants are treated in their home countries and are in need of asylum). There should be some means of recourse if a topic may be controversial but a matter for appropriate discourse and presentation.

In Sections 8 and 11, BHA should be able to waive both the Damage Deposit and the insurance policy requirements for certain legitimate community activities, as this may otherwise cause organizations to not provide services or presentations to BHA residents because they cannot afford to provide this (for example, if GBLS, BRTI, Homestart, MSAC, or others were to do a presentation on tenants’ rights)

In Section 9 subsection A, it is not clear what “high rise” means. For example, does this mean there would be one community room in each building at Alice Taylor? If the intent is to cover elderly/disabled sites, not all of them are designed as high

risers. It would be better to say that there shall be at least one community space or room (if not more) at each BHA development.

In Section 10, why would work orders be generated, and the work order system used? Couldn’t this just be coordinated with the management staff? If it goes through the normal work order system, there will probably be a bunch of head scratching. In addition, can the Local Tenant Organization or service organization simply take on the responsibility for putting up and taking down tables and chairs on its own (with the understanding that if there were problems, this could be a basis for future denial of a request for the space without making alternate arrangements).

In Section 11.C. it’s not clear how the RAB, REC, BRTI, and S8TI would be treated here. Similarly, it’s not clear if the reasonable exceptions found in Section 11.D.1 are just for Local Tenant Organizations. If there are exceptions, it should be clear that this is not limited to the terms of Section 11.D.1, but to other terms under Section 11.D (for example, that a meeting might be set on a short notice by an LTO, RAB, etc.) It is not clear if the pre-event inspection and rules review provided in Section 11.D.3 would be necessary for a Repeat User, a Resident Organization, or a service organization with an agreement.

Under Section 11.D.5, what if the user of the space is putting up white sticky paper to write down notes from the meeting (a common occurrence at many community meetings. Under Section 11.D.8, there is reference to an exception for service animals, but it may be that there is an emotional support animal (see HUD definitions).

Under Section 12, it’s not clear how certain organizations might be treated that don’t have residents at that site (this might be answered by how the terms in subsection B are defined—for example, a S8TI meeting).

The Policy is silent about food, and should probably address this (including disposal of waste, food preparation, etc.). Furthermore, it is silent on the bringing in of sound equipment and volume (it discusses instead how community equipment is used, but not how outside equipment should be handled so as to avoid disturbance or disruption of residents).

Response: The Community Space Use Policy (CSUP) is being implemented as a matter of necessity. It is necessary to prevent ongoing abuse in the use of community space and it is a better alternative than the BHA, on an ad hoc basis, severely limiting the use of some community space

The initial implementation of this policy will cover only BHA developments and will not apply to mixed finance developments. It may, however, serve as guidance for the mixed finance sites in developing their own community space use policies, if such a policy is needed.

Section 1, ¶ 3. This policy is focused on providing access for tenants not tenant organizations. This is not to suggest that tenant groups may not make use of community space but rather the avenue for achieving this result under the policy is through individual tenants. Nonetheless, the policy will be revised to use the term “local tenant organizations.”

Section 1, ¶ 4 and Section 3.K. will be revised by adding “or development” after the word “building” as it appears in each section.

Section 1, ¶ 4 – “exterior common areas.” While we appreciate the comment we do not believe these revisions are warranted at this time.

Section 3 Definitions. The policy defines the term “Community Equipment, as it is used in the policy. There is no attempt to cover other equipment or to outline the arrangements for how such other equipment may be provided or stored.

Sections 7. The policy will be revised to reflect this suggested revision. Subsection C. We do not believe this comment reflects a reasonable interpretation of Subsection C but see Section 1, ¶ 3 above.

Section 8 and Section 11. Under the policy the insurance requirement is discretionary and the damage deposit is refundable. Therefore, we see no reason why it would be necessary for the policy to provide that the BHA may waive both the damage requirement and insurance requirement.

Section 9 will be revised to address the concern raised by this comment.

Section 11.C. The policy will be revised to reflect the concern raised by this comment but see Section 1, ¶ 3 above.

Section 11.D .1. The “exceptions” are limited to just Section 11.D.1.

Section 11.D .8. This section will be revised to provide for “emotional support animals”.

Paragraph section 11. D. 5. The policy will be revised to address the concern raised by this comment.

Section 12. As indicated above the policy is focused on maximizing the extent to which community space can be made

available for tenant use. As clearly permissible under the policy, a tenant may facilitate a organization's use of a community space.

Food. The commenter is correct. The policy is silent about food as the policy is primarily intended to address access to and the types of use of community space by tenants.

Comment: The community space use policy had a lot of heated discussion last year, and is likely to spark interest again. BHA’s goal is to have a policy about how community space is used—right now, there isn’t a uniform policy, and there have been problems. Arleen noted that at Franklin Hill, there is NOT community space available for LTO use, and that every development—whether BHA directly run or mixed finance—should have such space. People agreed that the term “high rise” and the reference to individual “buildings” didn’t work to capture the reality of all of BHA’s sites. It was suggested that BHA should be using the Resident Empowerment Coalition (REC) to look at this, and a process should be used similar to how BHA developed and revised the Tenant Participation Policy (TPP) a few years ago. On Mac’s question about whether there were restrictions on the use of alcohol, John and others noted that the Code of Conduct does

bar this. It was suggested that there should be a presentation on this to the RAB at some point.

Response: See above response.

Comment: PR pp.9-10 One problem here has been with Mixed Finance sites. Residents at those sites, and advocates who work with them, often are not sure if they are public housing residents (subject to usual public housing rules on rents, grievances, etc.) or have other funding, and it is a challenge to get this information. This should be more transparent and readily accessible. Moreover, wherever possible, the same rules should be applied to all residents (as BHA tried to do with the Lower Mills and Heritage conversions).

Response: Management of mixed finance sites can provide residents or advocates with information about public housing status.

Occupancy:

Comment: AP pp. 13-15: It would be helpful to know if there have been any trends here in changes in housing needs in Boston over the last year, or in the assessment of

priorities. As GBLS has commented in the past, it would be helpful if some of the demographic information were more fine-tuned: for example, “families with disabilities” could just be single or two-person households whose needs could be accommodated within BHA’s elderly/disabled public housing portfolio, but it might also include families with children who would require larger units. (It is also not clear if the term “families with disabilities” on this chart might include families in which the head or spouse is not disabled, but there are disabled children.) Additional information as to relative needs within each group—for example, how many elders are at 30% of area median income? How many at 50%? etc. This would aid in evaluating how policies affect needs of different groups and income levels.

Response: Thank you for your feedback. The BHA utilizes the format provided by HUD. The BHA does review with separate and internal reports various demographic scenarios when determining household needs for different groups.

Comment: AP pp. 17-19: As has been noted in the past, it would be helpful to get this data separated into data for the BHA’s family public housing and its elderly/disabled portfolio. Here again, there seem to be discrepancies

between both data on overall city demographics and this list, as well as between public housing and Section 8. The percentage of Asian applicants on the public housing waiting list, for example, is far closer to that for the City’s overall low-income population than for the Section 8 waiting lists. Since BHA is proposing language in its ACOP to change how waiting lists are closed, and is leaving open the possibility that public housing waiting lists could be closed in certain bedroom sizes, it may be helpful to add language about that to this portion of the template.

Response: Thank you for your feedback. The BHA utilizes the format provided by HUD. The BHA will consider adding a note if possible regarding the opening and closing of the public housing waiting lists.

Comment: S pp. 2 and 8: As BHA proceeds forward with taking the steps to get access to the FBI data base for criminal history other than that in the DCJIS system (which will involve cooperation with local law enforcement officials), details should be provided to residents and the local advocacy community. Where there may be options as to how to proceed, an opportunity for prior review and comment should be provided.

Response: Absolutely, the BHA will always make its best efforts to keep our clients and advocacy community involved and informed.

Comment: S pp.3 and 9: If BHA changes the system for obtaining applications, such that applicants must attend mandatory briefings (with reasonable accommodation exceptions for persons with disabilities who cannot attend) or must work with advocacy organizations that are already familiar with submission requirements, revisions would be required here, since applicants would not be able to simply “pick up” an application. There are good reasons for the proposed change (to cut down on the number of incomplete submissions that unnecessarily tie up staff resources) but there may be details that need to be thought through (including how best to serve LEP applicants), and dialogue with a broader community would be beneficial.

Response: Thank you for your support and understanding. Yes, the BHA is aware and as always will ensure to find ways to best serve our LEP applicants and maintain our open communication with our broader community. The BHA is looking at the possibility to make the briefing video available on-line once it has finalized its English version and have it translated to Spanish and Chinese as soon as it may be possible. The applicants will

benefit receiving thorough and consisting information regarding the application process.

Comment: S p. 5: It would help to spell out more for the public housing programs what are the Supported Housing Programs where offers can be made before Priority One applicants: which sites, how many units, and what are the criteria for being eligible for this. Is this just the HomeBase set-aside with MBHP, or does it cover more?

Response: Thank you for your feedback. Throughout the years the BHA has had a number of supported housing programs within its public housing family and elderly/disabled portfolios. We will consider your recommendation and determine if this information may be added to our website.

Comment: Revisions in the Application Process: Somewhat related to the issues above are concerns that BHA and advocates have about the current application process. It usually takes at least 12 weeks between when an applicant submits an application for public housing or project-based Leased Housing at 56 Chauncy Street and when the application is entered into the computer system, given the large backlog. Applications are often incomplete, requiring rejection of the application and resubmission. This can happen

a number of times for any one applicant. Reduced staffing also posed challenges. In light of these problems, the Occupancy Department was on the verge of implementing a new application process this fall, under which applications could only be submitted after applicants attended a mandatory briefing and then returned during certain hours with application forms which would be reviewed by BHA staff before filing. (BHA would allow applicants who were being directly assisted by certain agencies with knowledge of the BHA tenant selection system to have their applications submitted by such agency staff without attending the mandatory briefing, and would also allow persons who could not attend the briefings due to disability to obtain applications by mail.) There are certainly a number of advantages and improvements that could be offered by the briefing, but it is not clear if it could handle the same load of applicants and if this could result in applicants being turned away due to full briefing slots. There are also challenges in meeting the needs of LEP clients with language needs other than those which were slated to be included in the briefing. This is all worth working through in the coming months.

Response: Thank you for your support and understanding. The BHA understands the

concerns and is and will take all measures to assist our clients with the best customer service possible. The BHA will ensure, as it has done to date, to find ways to best serve our LEP applicants and maintain our open communication with our broader community. The BHA is looking at the possibility to make the briefing video available on-line once it has finalized its English version and have it translated to Spanish and Chinese as soon as it may be possible. The applicants will benefit receiving thorough and consisting information regarding the application process and from having their applications reviewed promptly. This in return will avoid or reduce the large number of incomplete applications currently submitted which negatively impacts the clients.

Operations:

Comment: p. 7 (see also pp. 17 and 26): The Rent Manual should not just be available at management offices, but centrally, and ideally on-line. In addition, to the extent that there may be unique rent or other admissions or continued occupancy policies at mixed finance sites where the rules for the federal public housing units differ from those generally used by BHA, this should be spelled out for applicants and residents

at those sites and generally available to the community.

Response: The BHA is considering how to make this information more generally available on the new website. In the meantime admissions and continued occupancy information for mixed finance developments is available in the management offices at those developments.

Comment: S p. 17, Public Housing rents: It should be noted that while this and prior PHA Plans have provided for interim rent increases for public housing tenants whose incomes increase \$200/mo. or more above what was last reported, this has not yet been implemented, and requires use of the lease addendum (which also includes VAWA lease bifurcation provisions) which has already gone through the notice and comment period. If/when BHA decides to begin implementation (it did not do so in accordance with information it gave to HUD last year), it needs to be sure that there is plenty of notice and education of residents about this. BRTI/Homestart, in conjunction with MLRI and GBLs, did a major public housing rent training this fall, and are willing to collaborate with BHA on similar training if/when any changes are implemented.

Response: Thank you for your comment. Prior to

implementation the BHA will give adequate notice to residents. The BHA would also welcome assistance from HomeStart, BRTI and others in providing education to residents.

Comment: S pp. 31, under PHA coordination with the Welfare (TANF) agency:

There continue to be issues about making sure that tenants on vendor payments are handled properly—for example, that DTA is aware of and makes changes in rents when BHA changes rent, and that if there is an interruption in DTA payments, this is investigated so that tenants aren't put at risk of eviction for agency error.

Setting up vendor arrangements is also a challenge because of the need for inspections that verify that a unit is up to code as a precondition. There should be discussions between BHA and DTA senior staff about how to make this work as smoothly as possible, rather than have cases sit in limbo and not utilize vendoring arrangements as a good homeless prevention method.

For those transitioning from public assistance to work, in addition to making sure that residents get full advantage of the Earned Income Disregard (EID) in rent setting, it would be helpful to set up Electronic Fund Transfer arrangements so

that tenants could ask their banks to arrange for monthly direct payments to the BHA. Similar arrangements for SSDI and SSI recipients would avoid more expensive and intrusive representative payee arrangements.

Greater collaboration between BHA and DTA would reduce the error rate in cases that are improperly identified as “welfare sanction” cases (where federal public housing and Section 8 rents will not decrease despite income loss where TANF benefits were reduced for fraud or failure to comply with economic self-sufficiency requirements). Frequently TANF benefits are reduced or terminated for other reasons, and there has not been a good system set up for DTA and BHA to verify whether such reductions are subject to the “welfare sanction” rule or not.

Response: The BHA has been and will continue to explore the possibility of accepting electronic fund transfer of rent payments. The BHA will also review vendor payment issues. If particular cases can be referred the authority can determine if there are systemic issues to be addressed.

Comment: PR COMMENTS/ QUESTIONS ON THE FIVE- YEAR PROGRESS REPORT

This is the last year of the current 5-Year Progress Report. It, coupled with the 5-Year Plan,

is a critical document for long-term planning, since, if properly used, it allows you to track how well the BHA has performed. It also promotes a long-range vision. Prior to the end of 2014, BHA will need to roll out a new 5-year plan, and it should start working with the RAB and community partners as early as it can to identify what has worked and what has not in the current Plan. If the existing RAB’s term is extended for another year, BHA could start this work in the summer; if, on the other hand, the current RAB chooses to only have a 2-year term, BHA would have to wait until a new Board is elected and gets up to speed. In either event, it would be valuable to arrange for training so that RAB members can familiarize themselves with what goes into the 5-year plan, and can be encouraged to help to brainstorm for BHA’s future.

Response: BHA staff thanks the commenter for the comment and will refer the recommendation to the RAB.

Comment: PR Any new Public Housing Assessment System (PHAS) evaluation(s) since the one done for period ending 3/31/12, or projection as to when this will occur?

Response: The BHA has not yet received its PHAS score for the period ending 3-31-13.

Comment: PR BHA has floated a new Memorandum of

Agreement (MOA) for the RAB, but there are some concerns about making sure it is evenhanded, and GBLS is willing to work with RAB and BHA on this.

Response: BHA staff are not aware of any such new Memorandum, however BHA staff are aware that the current MOA does expire in March 2014 and will work with the commenter and RAB on extending the MOA.

Comment: PR pp.4-9 On the Elite software, it should be noted that there have been some problems –for example, in how balances were carried over, or how repayment arrangements or vendor payment arrangements are accounted for. This can make it very difficult for ledgers to be interpreted by residents or third parties (courts, those who could provide funding, etc.). There should be information about how BHA is addressing this.

Response: The BHA has made revisions to the resident ledger to satisfy court and legal concerns.

Comment: PR pp.9-10 Staff turnovers in both public housing and Section 8 can cause difficulties in follow-through. For example, if a tenant was in the middle of a rent adjustment, and staff move, this may present challenges, loss of information, shifts in how

residents are treated, etc.— particularly for tenants with limited English proficiency or disabilities. .

Response: The BHA endeavors to avoid inconvenience to public housing residents through staff changes. If there are particular cases, please bring them to the attention of the Director of Property Management.

Comment: PR pp. 13-14, Achieve a 20-day unit turn-around time at all developments:
The Progress Report does not say what the current performance is (how many days on average it takes to turn around a unit), as well as what the average turn-around time is at various sites. This information should be provided. The purpose of the Progress Report is to chart progress on numerical goals like this. The response provides other useful information, but doesn't answer the simple question. Performance reporting should also include (and separately break out) privately managed and mixed finance sites.

Response: BHA-wide unit turnaround time is 128.3 days. This information is also available by site. BHA staff would be happy to meet with the RAB to review and discuss this information.

The BHA does not collect this kind of performance information from mixed finance sites

because their management performance is no longer considered by HUD as part of the BHA's PHAS score. Only the physical inspection score for mixed finance sites is included in the BHA assessment.

Comment: PR p. 14, No more than 10% of the rent roll outstanding in any year: Here again, while the Progress Report contains useful information, it is not possible for a layperson to know from the report whether BHA is achieving this goal or not, and how far it is off. Reporting should also include privately managed and mixed finance sites.

Response: BHA-wide arrearage ratio is 28.2%.

Please see our response to the prior comment with respect to the collection of performance information for mixed finance sites.

Comment: PR p. 14, Fully implement preventive and planned maintenance schedules and increase the percentage of staff-initiated work items to 70% of the total: While there is some improvement here, performance is still significantly below the goal and is only creeping up. (Obviously funding affects this.) As with other goals, there should also be measurement of performance at privately

managed and mixed finance sites.

Response: The responses to the two prior comments address the collection of performance information from mixed finance developments.

Comment: PR pp. 14-15, Fully implement asset management by developing site-based plans that will ensure high occupancy, collection of all potential rent, and preservation of the physical assets: It is great that BHA has established a system so all of this data is available and can be tracked at the local level. This data should be shared with LTOs.

Response: Site-based performance information can be shared with LTOs.

Comment: PR p. 15, Establish resident health, energy efficiency and sustainability as priorities in the planning and implementation of all initiatives: More could be added here. It was a major focus of the Summit at the State House in July and the roadshow that BHA has prepared for LTOs and the RAB about the benefits of energy savings and initiatives (presented at the October RAB meeting) is very impressive.

Response: Thank you. BHA staff are working on finalizing the Strategic Sustainability Plan.

Comment: Question was asked about unit turnaround. Meena noted that at Washington Beech, they do this in 2 weeks. Everyone agreed that it depends on the state of the vacated unit, and whether there has been damage or extensive work is needed. There was a sense that some managers and maintenance staff were very efficient, and others were not. Red said he had heard a lot of complaints about work orders, and that no one was managing the phone. John noted that it is staffed, but not overnight, and so overnight calls go to the police. In addition, he said it was critical for residents to get the work order number assigned for follow-up. There was agreement that sometimes residents end-run the work order system and call managers directly, and this isn't the way to do it.

Response: Thank you for the comment.

Planning and Real Estate Development:

Comment: AP p. 3: Note that Replacement Housing Factor (RHF) funds are being phased out with a new system by HUD under its revised Capital Grant program. Will this affect any of

BHA's plans for expenditure of RHF?

Response: The BHA plans for future RHF expenditures for its redevelopment at Old Colony, as reflected in the draft Agency Plan. We do not anticipate this changing as a result of HUD's changes to the RHF system. However, it remains unclear what level of funding the BHA will receive under the new system.

Comment: AP pp. 3-5: Demolition and disposition activities:

As BHA develops and submits proposals for Phase III of redevelopment at Old Colony and for a Choice Neighborhoods implementation grant for Whittier Street, this information should be shared with the RAB and public with an opportunity for review and comment.

74 Highland Street disposition: What's going on with this?

For Groveland, a copy of the demolition approval should be shared with the RAB and GBLs. Has BHA obtained any replacement funding in conjunction with the loss of these units?

Response: We agree that future plans for all of the redevelopment projects

including Old Colony Phase 3 and Whittier CNI should be shared with the RAB and we will continue to do so.

The BHA has designated Urbanica, Inc. to develop housing at 74 Highland Street. Construction is anticipated to begin in the latter half of 2014.

The BHA is happy to share its approval from HUD for the demolition of Groveland units. To date, we have not received replacement funding for the loss of these units. It is not clear under HUD's new system when and whether we will receive such funding.

Comment: A question posed by residents should be addressed in the Progress Report or in response to comments (here or elsewhere). BHA has relied on Section 8 vouchers to assist with relocation for major capital work (such as at Old Colony). Given the Section 8 funding crisis, is it likely that this option will exist in the future—or will BHA have to rely solely on public housing units to meet relocation needs? This definitely will affect achievement of full occupancy and turn-around goals.

Response: We hope to be able to continue to offer Section 8 vouchers during relocation at redevelopment sites in the future; however, the availability of vouchers for relocation is

subject to HUD funding and approval. Typically, 25-35% of families choose a voucher over BHA public housing when faced with relocation due to redevelopment.

Comment: PR pp. 15-16, Orchard Gardens: In addition to the piece on homeownership which is included here, there should be follow-up of pieces for getting the LTO back into a formal partnership (and potential ownership) position as was part of the original design for both Orchard and Mission Main. Similar ideas should be explored in other redevelopment initiatives.

Response: BHA staff are happy to discuss this.

Comment: PR p. 16, Old Colony: Should material be added here on plans for a Phase III?

Response: The BHA recently designated Beacon Communities LLC as the developer for Phase 3 at Old Colony; however at this time there is no funding or schedule for Phase 3. We hope to finalize a plan in early 2014.

Comment: PR p. 16: While this does not discuss this, BHA should begin thinking about planning for year 30 at Harbor Point (likely to occur in 2016). Funds were set aside to avoid subsidy shortfall but also to be used to benefit BHA's other

programs, in collaboration with the developers and the BRA, and the last few years of the 30 year period were the time to examine long-term planning for the next phase. Obviously a lot has changed with long-term HUD funding, but given that there were originally 1100 public housing units in BHA's portfolio there, and a 99-year ground lease with a guarantee of over 400 long-term affordable units, this is a critical issue for affordable housing for Boston where BHA has a key stake and role. A review of the rents approved by BHA Leased Housing for tenants leased up at Harbor Point with Section 8 vouchers reveals a wide variation in the rents. At this time of cost-saving, a rent reasonableness review may be in order. At the same time, it appears that competition for units for U. Mass. Boston students may be driving what were formerly affordable units which could be leased with vouchers out of voucher range. This is worth some focus in preserving an appropriate balance of housing opportunities in this community.

Response: BHA staff will review the status of Harbor Point in regard to above comment and report back to the RAB.

Public Safety:

Comment: S p. 37, Public safety: It appears that certain developments were removed from the list—Orchard Gardens and Franklin Hill—and others were added—Mary Ellen McCormack and Fairmount. It is not clear why these changes were made, and what changes are going on here. There may be a question whether to include Fairmount in this report to HUD since it is a state development (Camden is as well, but it is jointly administered with Lenox Street and so its inclusion makes sense).

Response: No developments were omitted. The response begins "All Developments including..." Certain developments were intentionally identified because of their increased level of crime or criminal activity based on accumulated statistical data.