



**Public Housing & Rental Assistance Committee Meeting
September 19th, 2019, 1:00–2:30 p.m.**

Notes

[CLICK HERE for the Presentation from the Meeting](#)

[CLICK HERE for Materials from the Meeting](#)

I. Welcome & Introductions

II. Recent Investments in Public Housing

The FY2020 budget allocated an increased investment of \$6.5 million, a 10% increase from FY19. This increase comes after a decade of stagnant funding for Public Housing operating subsidy.

The FY2020 budget also allocated an increased investment for Mass Rental Voucher Program (MRVP). MRVP was funded at \$116 million with a \$10 million increase and \$6 million unexpended funds from FY19. Another significant change was the updating of Fair Market Rents (FMR) to the current standards which were stuck at 2005 level for last couple years ``

a. FY2020 Budget Advocacy Strategy, Donna Brown-Rego (MassNAHRO)

For budget advocacy materials shared by Donna, click the link at the top of the page.

Public Housing constitutes one of the major sources of housing for households with low income. Repair and maintenance of public housing units is essential to make sure households can live in them. Public Housing units have been in dire need of investment. Level funding for the public housing subsidy in reality was equivalent to decreased funding.

Advocacy to educate legislators on the public housing subsidy, expenses covered and not covered by tenant rents was effective in creating awareness.

Collaboration with CHAPA and its Building Blocks Coalition, MassUnion of Public Housing Tenants along with local stories and

hard data showing difference in capital and subsidy helped create support in the legislature which currently also has a responsive leadership.

House Ways & Means Chair, Rep. Michlewitz has been a leader for public housing funding. Housing Committee chairs - Rep. Honan and Sen. Crighton, Senate House Ways & Mean Se. Rodriguez are strong supporters for public housing and hear about it from their constituents.

b. Plans for using the allocated increases in Public Housing, Amy Stitely & Ben Stone, DHCD

Budget guidelines for Housing Authorities – bottom lines for public housing increased by 10% subject to the increased funding in FY20 budget.

DHCD also plans to make additional funding available for resident service coordinators. The service coordinators link elderly, people with disabilities and families with low-income to supportive services and other community resources. A NOFA for resident coordinators is out and will provide service to young, disabled, elderly and other populations.

Securing increased funding for public housing has allowed DHCD to continue to support programs like the Massachusetts Learning, Employment and Asset Program (MassLEAP). This program provided eligible residents of state-aided public housing developments and/or MRVP participants with a set of supportive services needed to support meaningful and sustainable earned income growth. Although the MassLEAP program ended, new funding will allow a similar, redesigned program to be launched to support residents.

Capital funding for public housing was \$90 million in FY19 is up to \$109.5 million in FY20.

The need for capital funds for public housing is high. Members expressed concern that housing authorities only get a portion of the capital funding needed to make critical repairs. DHCD estimates need for capital funding for public housing to be \$1.45 billion and MassNAHRO estimates it at \$2 billion in the current portfolio. There is a strong need for a plan to meet the need of capital funding.

The Committee also discussed other Public Housing issues for consideration:

- ❖ Accessibility issues in public housing units with many elderly tenants
- ❖ Modernization of public housing
- ❖ Construction cost inflation

- ❖ High need of family housing units
- ❖ Rent disparities between public housing and other rental assistance programs

Some solutions proposed:

- ❖ Public-private redevelopment of public housing
- ❖ Third party study on the unmet needs of funding for housing authorities

III. Tenant Board Member Legislation

Legislation pending at the Rules Committee in the Senate. Needs to be passed for the Spring 2020 Board member elections. Infrastructure for training for Tenant Board members is present with MelKing providing the training.

Stakeholders, including Mass. Union, MassNAHRO, CHAPA, DHCD, the Legislature, and the Secretary of State's Office are working together to come to agreement on final language in order to help pass the bill.

IV. Rep. Elugardo's bill H.3562, *An Act enabling public housing authorities to borrow against real estate equity of publicly-owned properties*

For information on the bill, including a summary, please click the link for materials at the top of the page.

CHAPA offered support for the legislation at a hearing for the legislation in the summer. The Representative has continued to reach out to stakeholders to work on the legislation. CHAPA will work on preparing more formal comments and suggestions for the legislation that will be shared with the Committee.

V. Bid-Protest Update

As of the meeting date, the Attorney General's Office has not issued its decision in the bid protest case involving the privately-owned affordable housing development in Springfield, Chestnut Park Apartments.

CHAPA filed a brief opposing the bid protest, saying that public construction bidding laws should not apply, with over 40 organizations signing on - for a copy of the brief, [click here](#).

VI. Member Updates

Next Meeting: Thursday, November 21st, 1 pm - 2:30 pm