

MINUTES
HOUSING AUTHORITY OF COVINGTON
CITY HEIGHTS RESIDENT MEETING - SESSION 1
Tuesday, June 23, 2020 6:00 P.M.

A Resident Meeting regarding the Possible Sale of City Heights was held on **Tuesday, June 23, 2020** from 6:00pm-7:00pm in the City Heights Community Room.

Video Link: <https://youtu.be/jGI95ty6TCo>

The Housing Authority of Covington Staff Panel consisted of: Steve Arlinghaus, Executive Director; Chris Bradburn, Deputy Director/Jobs Plus Grant Coordinator; Jon Adkins, Director of Resident Services; Shannon Wilson, Senior Housing Manager; and Lakitha Pearl, City Heights Housing Manager

41 residents and community members were on the sign in sheet.

AGENDA:

PRESENTATION- (See Attachment A, on page 7)

Slide 1: (Title Slide) Proposed Sale/Disposition of City Heights

Slide 2: Staff Introductions

Slide 3: Before We Get Started

Slide 4: Before We Get Started (continued)

Slide 5: Background

Slide 6: Disposition Plan

Slide 7: HUD Review

Slide 8: Upon Application Approval

Slide 9: Benefits

Slide 10: Questions/Comments

Slide 11: Please Give Us Your Input

Steve Arlinghaus presented: **Proposed Sale/Disposition of City Heights** in the following topic order (not all topics are referenced in slides or in numerical order):

- Introduced the Housing Authority Staff Panel and City Heights Resident Council members, Jerrold Burress and Tosha Harris, Covington Police Officers, Eric Williams and Brian Powers. HAC staff also mentioned in attendance were: Allura Eckert, Executive Assistant; Linda DiGirolamo, Construction Manager/Demolition-Disposition Liaison; Mike Riordan, Procurement

Officer/Capital Asset Manager; Kayla Chalfant, Program Manager/FSS Coordinator; Danielle Watson, Outreach Specialist; Debbie Crabb, Assistant Property Manager; and Nick Banshbach, Finance Director.

- Another session of this presentation will begin at 7:00pm. Tomorrow, Wednesday, June 24, 2020, there will also be a 6:00pm session, and a 7:00pm session. Social distancing and COVID-19 precautions will be followed. All sessions will be video taped and available online, and minutes will be recorded and distributed to City Heights residents and others in attendance who request copies.
- Stated that this meeting will cover a general scope of what has been done to date and what the plans are moving forward.
- A survey will be handed out at the end of this session. One of the questions will ask where you would want to live outside of City Heights if the opportunities are available. (Public housing, HCV program, Tenant Protect Program or other.) HAC will have to work with the City of Covington, and with HUD in Washington DC, so enough vouchers can be provided that will allow residents to move at any given time. Residents do not have to sign their name.
- City Heights is 65 years old with 66 buildings (63 dwelling) and 366 apartments. In August 2019, HAC commissioned an independent study to conduct a Physical Needs Assessment (PNA) to determine what is needed to maintain/upgrade City Heights. Creative Housing Solutions from Cincinnati. They determined that it would take at least \$50 million dollars to bring it up to safe and sanitary standards. The federal government will not give HAC \$50 million dollars for modernization.
- The reason that demolition/dispositions are happening nationwide and sales of properties like City Heights is to give families better opportunities to live in better conditions. It is not to get rid of the people, it is a movement across the United States to provide better housing opportunities.
- “We will have the opportunity to build additional housing potentially in the City of Covington, also potentially on the outside of Covington. But we don’t know what that is yet.”
- Some of the findings from the Physical Needs Assessment show the hillside slipping. It can be seen in the cracking in the stairsteps. The sewer is slipping off the hillside. If the sanitary line were to slip off the hillside, the cost to repair that would be more than what the federal government would give. It would automatically shut some units down that day. There are several issues similar that must be considered for the safety of the residents and everyone else.
- Disposition plan- “Section 18 Demo/Dispo” it’s a plan to give us the opportunity to sell, or simply remove all the buildings that are here. HUD will require an appraisal which will start in the next several days. It may take 3 to 4 weeks and a value will be put to that appraisal. A consultant has been hired to assist in this process. The target date for this “fast track” plan is 9/30/20. Approval from HUD may be as early as the beginning of 2021.
- Jobs Plus Program should continue through December of 2022. At this stage, we are going to try to continue that program so those enrolled will continue to get the benefits.
- Once HUD approves all the residents will be notified and more meetings will be held.
- Residents must be in good standing on their lease to be eligible for (relocation) benefits. Rent must be up to date and make sure that you are not a problem tenant. There are many things that the residents must consider to qualify for benefits.
- If someone wants to move from here tomorrow, they will not be obligated to stay. But no benefits will be available until HUD approves the Section 18 Demo/Dispo plan. Notice will still need to be given when moving out.
- TANK Bus Service- has brought to our attention that some “youngsters” have been throwing rocks at the buses and breaking windows. The Covington Police Department has also taken

reports of bus vandalism and are working with TANK. TANK has considered discontinuing bus service and flyers were distributed last week asking for support from the community. It is in the best interest of the residents to report these individuals. The families of the children who are committing these acts can be evicted. All reports will remain confidential. Most incidents have been reported after 6pm.

- Once this program is approved, a set dollar amount will be determined, based on how many rooms a unit has. You may use that money to pay a contracted mover to help you move or use it to use however you wish.

Resident & Public Questions and Comments (answered by Steve Arlinghaus unless indicated otherwise)

Q. Resident- "Will the movers be able to move us anywhere or is there a limit to where they are going to go?"

A. There is a limit, but we do not know what that limit is yet.

Q. Resident - "If the Housing Authority has had City Heights for 60 + years but has been receiving grant money, why have there been no upgrades?"

A. Steve Arlinghaus asked attendees "How much grant money do you think the Housing Authority of Covington gets?" He continued to explain that the Housing Authority of Covington received about \$1.7 million dollars for everything. Big ticket items include a black top at City Heights by the park that has been estimated @ about \$25 thousand dollars. 2 roofs that need replaced were quoted at \$20 thousand each. "When you talk about renovations, the well dries up fast." The \$1.7 million is for the next fiscal year. Presently HAC is operating on funds given to us last year which was about \$1 to \$1.2 million dollars. HUD continues to reduce the funding for public housing across the nation while the cost of living is going up, the cost of repairs is going up and there is just not enough money to meet the demands.

Q. Resident- "If you are planning on moving some of the City Heights residents to Latonia Terrace, isn't that a risk? Because if the hill is slipping, isn't it slipping into Latonia? Will you be taking away Latonia?"

A. There are no plans on taking down Latonia Terrace. In fact we may look at doing some renovations to Latonia Terrace over the next couple of years. As far as slippage goes, just this past week we found out that one of the buildings on Alexandria has movement going on which is causing sinking. These units were created as bomb shelters the way they were built, we can't control the hillside.

Q. Resident- "Would City Heights residents take priority on the waiting lists for public housing?"

A. City Heights residents will take priority on the waiting lists.

Q. Resident- "When you apply for Section 8, you are only given 90 days to find a place. Will the 90 days still be in place for the City Heights residents or will we have a longer amount of time?"

A. We do not have an answer for that. We will have to get back to you with an answer.

Q. Jerome Bowels, President of the NAACP identified himself and stated that he has a question about the significance of the City Heights property. Mr. Bowels stated that he is torn between demolition and progress and asked if a consultant was hired to come up with number in terms of how much it would take for renovation, \$50 million dollars, and suggested that another independent consultant should be hired for another opinion. Mr. Bowles stated "What I'm sensing is, there is a trend around the nation that uproots certain populations to make room for another population of higher socioeconomic income." Mr. Bowles stated that he is not against progress and development but remembers Jacob Price and it was done in bad taste and in bad faith and people still suffer from that today by the decisions that were made by those that were here back then and the same kind of language is being used as justification to tear that facility down. "Crime ridden, concentration, no access, ... but you're going to make that for the new folks." At some point \$1.7 million dollars over the years should have been prioritized to upgrade this facility. It seems like little priority or gradual renovation has been done over the years with City Heights and now it's being said that there is no money. Where did all the money go over the years? This place has been here for over 60 years and the Housing Authority of Covington has been getting such and such million dollars every year, there should have been investment. Not necessarily a \$25 thousand dollar blacktop or a \$25 thousand dollar roof top, there should have been additional things, appearance, a new grocery store, and quality of life issues. "I'm sensing that the quality of life issues for the Housing Authority of Covington wasn't done because maybe the priorities were put in other areas. I'm not necessarily buying the story of the reason to tear it down and you have to come up with something better to describe that because I know this, once you uproot people here there are people in certain areas in Northern Kentucky that don't want this population in their area. I think you all know that too. What some of these areas want is for residents to work out there but then come back to where you came from. That's one of the main disadvantages of our region, it's unfortunate. So there needs to be a discussion with the counties; Boone, Campbell, about who you might be sending to them because they might be pushing back. There are a lot more facts to this, and I don't want people here to be caught up in a situation where the conversations make you feel comfortable about your future, because in the minds of the people the planned it, they know it's not that way. I'm looking at the information that is presented and I know it's not that way as well. I'm not saying to not do as you planned but I'm asking you to be real with the people. I'm not sensing that you are being real with them about how this process works. This is a new administration that might be doing something different than the past, but the past got us here where we are today.

A. "I can't disagree with much of what you said, I'm lost for words. The reality is, I've been here for a year and 11 months and I'm not going to be held for the sins of others. If they, at the time, didn't put a fair and adequate amount in to rehabilitation, or do what they should have been doing, but I know that's not the answer everyone wants to hear. But the reality is that is the reality and I have to look at the cards that I've been handed and how do I want to play it. Now we can skip this whole idea, and we can live just how we live right now. How many people have work orders that haven't been taken care of? (6 residents in the video raised their hands) There you go. Why not? Because we don't have enough personnel to do the job. (Inaudible response from resident) And you're also dealing with the COVID-19 issue that we've been dealing with for about 3 months. (Inaudible response from resident continues) So we had to look at what's the best practice for the safety of our employees, the safety of our residents so we had to look at what other housing authorities were doing across the United States. What we are focusing on is emergency needs of one kind or another. It's just overwhelming right now with the circumstances that we are dealing with. Another even we have been dealing with, back in February we had an arcing event at Golden Tower. We had to fork out \$210 thousand dollars for that immediate repair then we had to forgive a month's rent from the residents which is another \$35 thousand dollars. That's not counting all the time that our staff spent on that measure. So we talk about grant monies that

we have available at times which is an unknown figure. We never know how much the federal government is going to give us. It's never been more than \$2 million dollars that I'm aware of. In February of 2018, there was another arcing event at Golden Tower where the residents were out for a couple of months or so and that event cost \$1.6 or \$1.7 million dollars to fix to get those folks back in their homes. We were reimbursed from the insurance company approximately \$1 million dollars. So we lost \$700 thousand of our capital funds that would have been used for other purposes. I'm not trying to make excuses why the money is not being spent here. I'm just telling you the reality of the little bit of money we get. It's hard to spread money out and be fair to everybody at the same time. Part of our thought process was, we could have waited a few months to say anything more to you all. We didn't want to do that. We want to be upfront today. We want you to know what we know today. So we will move you along and keep you informed and know the challenges that we are facing and we hear from you, the challenges that you're facing, then we put our heads together and how can we make it better for everyone, one way or another. That's what this message is all about tonight."

Q. Resident- "Will our deposits move over to another location or are we going to have to come up with different amounts?"

A. Deposits are always refundable as long as you have met the requirements of the lease or damages that will come out of that.

Q. Resident- (Inaudible)

A. "I don't know."

Steve Arlinghaus further stated "There has been a lot of violence and criminal activity up here and you all know that as much as we do. And just this past week, or since November, we have been researching a better security system to make this place safe and we signed a contract today with a company out of North Carolina for City Heights, Latonia Terrace and Golden Tower for \$650 thousand dollars. For the current cameras we have, when they are working, span about from here to here (arm motions) and nothing behind them. The new cameras span 360 degrees and see 1 thousand feet away and you can see as plain as day, even at night. So there is going to be some changes when you see them going in, and the Covington Police will be able to tune in with their cell phones, anywhere, anytime. We are also going to have license plate readers that are more aggressive than we currently have and the readers will be tied into the state system. So if there is an out of state warrant, boom! They'll be automatically identified! So we are upgrading here. And we are doing this for the safety of the residents. If we didn't care about the residents, knowing we've got this demo/dispo project going on, we wouldn't want to spend this kind of money. But we are concerned about your safety. And this new system is phenomenal! We think we should have it up and running by about mid-August. We also today received bids, again looking out for the safety of the children that live here, a lot of the schools started teaching with computers and our children didn't have internet service. A lot of them don't have computers. So we are in the process of working on campus Wi-Fi which will encompass all of Latonia Terrace and City Heights. We hope to have this in place by the school year or shortly thereafter. "

Q. Resident- "Why are you all so worried about spending money on a security system when you are going to tear down City Heights?"

A. "Why? The same reason TANK's buses are getting destroyed and broken windows from the kids throwing rocks. So even if we have them on video we don't have to worry about no one saying anything to us. Most of the time when there are crimes up here nobody wants to talk. 5 people can watch someone shoot somebody "I didn't see anything, didn't see nothing" do you know how many times the police hear that? And we wonder why we can't get rid of the bad ones. Because everyone is afraid and I understand that. So this security system we're looking at that we're going to have, right now our current security cameras cover about 10% of all of City Heights. The new systems will cover about 90% at City Heights. And like I said, it's top of the line and for the safety and security of everyone here. We can also take these up and move them to another location. The same thing with Latonia. Our plans are to talk to the city officials about building something else within the city of Covington for public housing. We don't have a plan yet. But we can transport these same cameras to the new locations as well."

Q. Resident- (Inaudible)

A. "Before we start asking people to leave? I don't know that timeframe yet. It's not going to be in the next 6 or 8 months if that's what you're thinking. So the question is, how soon does everybody have to start moving. We don't have the answer to that yet. 1st we have to get HUD's approval to do this. Then through the course of all of the documentation we have to submit to them, they want to know a plan "What are you going to do with everybody that lives here? What are you going to replace it with?", if anything. So we do plan on replacing some and we are looking at options. I know the mayor has talked to the judge executive of Boone County already, and there's been talk about factories like Amazon, for example. Amazon has been saying "Hey, why don't you get some public housing in this area, we have a lot of jobs and it would be close to the residents that way." And that's just been some of the small talk that's been going on, but again, we are not that far down the road.

Q. Resident- (barely audible) - Resident made statement about stolen cars and criminal activity at a dead end.

A. "With the new cameras, if you had a name plate on of the place you worked at like Joe or Mary or Pete, the camera will pick it up."

Q. Resident (barely-audible) Resident made statement about the dead end being dark.

A. "Trust me, that area will be covered fine. Like I said, these cameras in the dark will be like looking at you right here. So that won't be a problem."

Q. Jerome Bowles from the NAACP - "Did you say there is enough housing in Covington to accommodate the residents here?"

A. "There is not. I don't believe there is. I'm going out on a limb, if everyone here was to get up and leave tomorrow, it would probably take entire greater Cincinnati area to absorb 366 families and I'm not sure if that would work on short notice and that's why we are talking about phasing this over a period of time. We've talked about this possibility with HUD, maybe we can allow seniors to be relocated first and that would allow us to continue the Jobs Plus program, because we don't want to harm those in the Jobs Plus program, that's working out very well right now, I think we have a couple hundred residents that are signed up and participating, and at least 70 of them are receiving all the benefits now. Their rent is staying where it's at, even though they are making more money. So again, this is a program

that Chris Bradburn spearheaded and I came in 2 weeks after the grant was given and learned about it then. It's an opportunity about how we can help the residents. It's been very successful to date.

Q. Resident- (inaudible)

A. "How do we work with landlords, we don't work with landlords. Landlords aren't required to work with Section 8."

Steve Arlinghaus asked the residents to complete the survey and stated that they do not have to sign their names, exit out the stage door (COVID-19 precaution) and thanked residents for attending.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Steve Arlinghaus, Executive Director adjourned the meeting at approximately 6:56pm.