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Testimony/Discussion re: FY 2014 Alexandria budget with relationship to the Housing Master Plan and the HUD Action Plan

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BACKGROUND/PURPOSE

1. Formerly on the Affordable Housing Master Plan Commission until had to resign because of conflict of interest to return to HUD as ^a rehired annuitant. Now am on the Social Services Board.
2. Committed to affordable housing in Alexandria. Lived in downtown Alexandria for over 40 years. Petitioned my old town neighborhood in the 70's for support for the Annie B. Rose elderly high rise. Love Alexandria—want to “give back” by using my 40 years as a manager and government retire~~ment~~^{ent} to volunteer...
3. PURPOSE: My comment on the FY 2014 Alexandria's budget with mention of the invaluable Housing Master Plan and HUD Action Plan.

COMMENTS:

1. PROBLEM: While Alexandria has received kudos as the best place to live (I agree), there are concerns. Unfortunately like all medium sized cities, there is substantial duplication in the Alexandria government, including but not limited to housing services. For instance, it is a duplicative expense to have a separate Master Plan by the City and another Master Plan for Housing, a Strategic Plan by ARHA, and another plan for elderly initiatives (especially when there are connections among the plans).

SOLUTION: I recommend that FULL use be made for budget purposes of all of planning and operational approaches. The Mayor (at the City Council work session on the Housing Master Plan on April 9, 2013) indicated that partnerships and leveraging has the potential of addressing the budget crisis. As a reward I recommend that staff or outsourced staff proposing leveraging (that pay off monetarily) should receive a bonus or some type of recognition. Since Mildrilyn Davis and Roy Priest coordinate well and both have longstanding expertise coupled with ARHA's excellent track record re: expanding affordable housing through use of tax credits, and proposed jobs for ARHA tenants and neighborhood residents (Section 3 jobs emphasis is in ARHA's Strategic Plan but not in the Housing Master Plan),

- Therefore, I propose that ARHA be used to maximum extent possible for implementation of Alexandria FY 2014 priorities. For instance, like Arlington, DC, and other jurisdictions in the area, Alexandria (ARHA) could adopt shallow vouchers administered by ARHA for workforce housing (using Home monies as matching funds). Note ARHA's voucher program is successful; ARHA is a high performer from HUD...
- Or ARHA could be involved in the microbusinesses using the \$50,000 in reprogrammed CDBG funds. Roy Priest has expertise in resident businesses. Why isn't this being considered?

2. **PROBLEM:** The Housing Master Plan as a guide to the FY 2014 budget is incomplete in many respects:

SOLUTION: While the Housing Master and FY 2014 budget has goals, it is devoid of specific TARGETS—IE, /SPECIFIC TIMEFRAMES AND BUDGETS necessary for budget decisions. The Housing Master Plan is a good road map and must be continued.

3. **PROBLEM:** The Housing Master Plan is not updated for the loss of affordable housing in both Beauregard and potentially Hunting Towers (Hunting Towers has many small sized units reportedly perfect for the elderly who need affordable housing.). It is also not updated for the projection of senior Alexandrian's that will need affordable housing a decade from now.

SOLUTION: Since need an option soon, consider several possibilities Include as one option shallow vouchers run by ARHA (rather than losing vouchers as other housing authorities have already done...

4. **PROBLEM:** The Homeless Housing First goal (set by HUD- a priority of the HUD Secretary) is not being accomplished thus losing grant funds for city. Already the FY 2014 proposed budget cuts mental health workers from the social services budget.

SOLUTION: Need a closer monitoring system by top management. It is insufficient to merely have lofty goals in the Master Housing Plan without feasibility of accomplishing them. This would include using "Out of Reach" the NLIHC needs assessment tool with Alexandria's Annual rent survey (pp. 14-15). As discussed, as a negotiating tool, propose what housing is needed in absolute terms of local appropriations; trades-offs are always a part of budget formulation.

Recommend that the combined staff of Office of Housing and ARHA need to focus on these revisions before the City's FY 2014 budget is finalized.

Recommend further that Alexandria housing staff view Arlington Va. 2011, 2012 and 2013 publications and videos as a model format. Recommend that the Master

Affordable Housing Plan be supported as well as updated asap as it needs to be used to guide budget decisions as well as decisions on the Action Plan.

5. PROBLEM: What income level should be served (FY 2014 budget)?

SOLUTION;

I recommend that the City's priorities for affordable housing be reexamined Acknowledge that for the budget that there are insufficient resources to serve everyone. Can it be first come first serve or some other procedural way? Should all residents be counted up to 80% limit or should use the tax credit up to 60% of area median (ELI)—i.e., recommend 60% AMI that includes tax credit limitations. Definitions on page 13 need to be adjusted so that there are resources left for the elderly and homeless—both are growing populations and generally under 30% ELI. Note up to 80% AMI (currently in the Master Plan) assumes homeownership SO 60% could mean that homeownership programs are not completed.

6. PROBLEM: Current ARHA and Office of Housing Inventories--- past and current should be added as an appendix to the Housing Master Plan to present the vanishing amount of affordable housing.

SOLUTION: Add as an appendix to Housing Master Plan on ARHA and Housing office inventories.

This concludes my testimony.

Questions or comments will be answered on-line. Thank you.