

Late Order

Councillor Russell

Resolved: That the
Cambridge Housing Authority
submit periodic reports
regarding ~~progress~~ in the
various housing projects,
both regular & Elderly ~~on~~
every 60 days similar to
the one which was placed on
file at this meeting.

(Charter Right Item # 15)
from meeting of 2-18-86)

109

#16
Commissioner Russell

2/24/1986

Ordered:

That the CHA submit periodic
reports regarding vacancies in
the various housing projects

BOTH regular and elderly

every 60 days using the

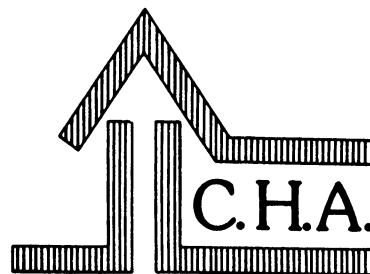
report out line contained in

their memorandum to

the City Council dated

2-25-86

CAMBRIDGE HOUSING AUTHORITY



C A M B R I D G E
M A S S A C H U S E T T S
02139
(617) 864-3020

February 6, 1986

Mr. Robert W. Healy
City Manager
City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Mr. Healy:

The following is intended to serve as a response to your request of January 16th regarding housing issues raised by various City Councillors including Councillor Russell's order of January 13th. For the sake of clarity, I have organized the response into four areas, namely: I. Emergency Housing, II. Applicant Waiting List, III. Vacant Apartments, IV. Trust Linkage Fund.

I. EMERGENCY HOUSING

Since 1976, the Cambridge Housing Authority has given emergency status for placement in public housing apartments only to:

- Applicants displaced by natural disaster such as fire or flood;
- Applicants residing in exceptionally hazardous substandard conditions such as an apartment condemned by the City which cannot be repaired in a reasonable period of time;
- Applicants with serious, long term medical problems which require the special characteristics of public housing.

Because many of the applicants on the standard waiting list are also living in inadequate housing situations, have serious medical problems, etc., the Housing Authority has made every effort to insure the integrity of the standard waiting list by administering the emergency housing policy in a very strict, consistent fashion. Only applicants whose emergencies arose in Cambridge or who can resolve their emergency situation only through an apartment in Cambridge are eligible for emergency placement. Eighteen such families/applicants were granted emergency status and placed in CHA housing in 1985.

As pressure on the Cambridge housing market increased and the need for emergency responses for Cambridge families has grown, the Housing Authority has made regular reviews of its policies, and its resources. In 1984, the Authority created an emergency policy to make Section 8 subsidies available when an applicant:

- has been displaced by government action;
- is without housing due to natural disaster or exceptionally hazardous substandard conditions;

- has a long term physical or mental problem which is made worse by current housing conditions;
- is or will be without housing due to circumstances beyond the control of the applicant or of relatives or friends with whom the applicant has been living;
- has received a rent increase following rehabilitation through a program of the City of Cambridge.

In order to qualify for Section 8 emergency under any of the above mentioned criteria, the applicant must meet each of the following prequalifications. That is, the applicant must:

1. not have caused or substantially contributed to creating the situation giving rise to the emergency and
2. have pursued all available avenues to prevent the emergency including but not limited to seeking legal counsel, seeking protection of his or her rights through the Rent Control Board, the Department of Inspectional Services, and/or the courts and
3. have made fullfaith efforts to resolve the emergency by attempting to locate alternative housing and
4. have been a resident of Cambridge at the time the emergency arose.

The new Section 8 emergency policy has proved helpful and has made it possible for the Authority to assist more families in crises. (In 1985 the CHA granted 17 "emergency" Section 8 certificates. Of these, 15 resulted in leased units.)

In recent months, however, it has become clear through the applicants who have called upon the Authority directly and from the expressions of concern from members of the City Council, that the need for emergency solutions has continued to increase.

On the third of December last year, the Board of Commissioners approved an expanded public housing emergency policy and requested state and federal approval. The proposed expansion would add two categories for emergency status to the current policy on a pilot basis:

1. an applicant who is without housing and
 - a. the loss of housing was due to circumstances beyond the control of the applicant or of relatives or friends with whom the applicant was living; and
 - b. the applicant has fully explored all available resources in an effort to locate alternative housing; and
 - c. the applicant has not caused or substantially contributed to the loss of housing; and
 - d. the applicant has pursued all available ways to prevent or avoid the loss of housing.
2. The applicant is elderly and his/her health is seriously jeopardized by current living conditions.

We received our final approval of these new provisions from HUD and EOCD just this month. We expect to begin implementing these provisions by March 1st.

Incidentally, in January 1986 alone, the CHA has placed nine emergency applicants who were victims of the Columbia Terrace fire in early January.

II. APPLICANT WAITING LIST

Although elderly housing and emergency housing applications have been and continue to be taken daily, the family housing waiting list had been closed for several years. This was due to unrealistically long waiting periods and the lack of placement opportunities because of the reconstruction of Washington Elms and Jefferson Park.

In the spring of 1985, however, the CHA obtained federal and state approval to open family housing applications for a limited time. We opened the CHA family housing waiting list and took applications for a two week period from April 1 to April 12, 1985. All applicants who qualified as residents of Cambridge were given preference and placed on the waiting list ahead of non-residents. The place of each Cambridge resident on the waiting list was determined by lottery by bedroom category. Non-resident applications have been held in a pool and will not be placed on the waiting list unless and until all Cambridge applicants have been called.

To date, the Housing Authority has called in all applicants from pre-1985 waiting lists and 551 of the 2,752 families who applied in April. Reviewing, updating and completing files for 1,457 Cambridge families applicants on the waiting list is an on-going daily activity. As applicants' files are completed and they are placed in apartments or removed from the waiting list, their numbers are removed from the posted waiting list which is updated monthly and displayed for the public at our Leasing and Occupancy office. To avoid confusion, the Authority has not assigned new waiting list numbers to families remaining on the list after higher applicants have been removed from the list. Instead the Authority has provided

information as to the number of families remaining on the list. For example, if Mrs. Smith is number 56 on the two bedroom list and the first 25 applications have been placed or closed, we would inform Mrs. Smith that there are now 30 families ahead of her on the list. We have not changed Mrs. Smith's waiting list number to #31 for fear that successive changes would confuse applicants and staff members.

Because of laws and regulations protecting the confidentiality of applications, the Authority is not authorized to release the names of applicants on the waiting list. We hope, however, that the following information about waiting list activity during the past year will be helpful and informative.

Standard Applications for Family Developments

Applications Received in 1985	2,752 ✓
Applications from Cambridge Residents	1,457.
Applicants Called for Interviews	551.
Applicants Currently in Processing	169 .
Applicants Placed in Public Housing Units	123*.
Applications closed (ineligible, not interested, or no response)	259 .
Total Cambridge Residents Remaining on the List 1-30-86	1,139.

Emergency Applications in 1985

Total 1985 Emergency Applications	177
Total Emergency Applications Approved	35
Emergency Applications Approved for Public Housing	18
Emergency Applications Approved for Section 8	17

Standard Applications for Elderly Developments

Applications Received in 1985	476
Applications from Cambridge Residents	307
Applicants Placed in Elderly Housing	85
Total Applications on Waiting List, 1-30-86	374
Total Cambridge Residents on Waiting List, 1-30-86	261

Applications for Section 8 Housing Assistance, 1985

Applications taken in June 1985	1,340
Applications from Cambridge Residents	717
Applicants Awarded Section 8 Certificates in 1985	379**
New Section 8 Leases in 1985	166**
Total Section 8 Tenants, 1-30-86	810
Number of Remaining Cambridge Residents on the List 1-30-86	628

* An additional 19 families from the pre-1985 waiting list were placed in family housing during 1985 for a total of 142

** These figures include carryover applicants from 1984 who were processed in 1985 and leased units in 1985.

III. VACANT APARTMENTS

The number of vacant apartments in the CHA inventory is currently higher than it has been for the past two years for several reasons:

A. We brought back "on line" a number of reconstructed apartments at Washington Elms and Jefferson Park. Many of which were filled by transfers from our other developments thus creating more vacancies elsewhere in the inventory.

B. Transfers of underhoused/overcrowded and overhoused families had been delayed for several years because of the Washington Elms reconstruction and attendant relocation. When some 85 families returned to Washington Elms, leaving a large number of vacant apartments throughout our inventory, the CHA chose to deal with these long awaited transfers. This is especially true at Newtowne Court. Of course, each transfer within the development requires the preparation (painting, floor refinishing, etc.) of two apartments. These transfers were/are very much needed and should be concluded this spring.

C. Several units at Newtowne Court and Jefferson Park cannot be rented at this time because they must be restored through the modernization program (Newtowne Court) or they are necessary as a vacant resource to facilitate planned modernization activity (Jefferson Park). At Newtowne Court 16 apartments are unrentable because of serious roof and masonry leaks. We have obtained modernization funding to correct this situation and these units should be restored and re-rented this fall.

In that portion of Jefferson Park which is not being completely reconstructed we are undertaking a \$4 million modernization project. This includes the complete removal of existing bathrooms and installation of totally new bathrooms in occupied apartments. We are, therefore, reserving a few apartments in each affected building as emergency facilities should the need arise.

D. Elderly Housing

Manning Apartments: five one bedrooms, three offered for 2/1 lease, two ready for 2/15 lease

J.F. Kennedy Apartments: four one bedrooms, two reserved for transfers 2/15; two to be leased 3/1

L.B. Johnson Apartments : three studios, one offered for 2/1 lease; two ready for 2/15 lease;
one one bedroom ready for 2/15 lease

45 Linnean Street: one studio offered for 2/7 lease*

Millers River Apartments: five studios offered for 2/1 lease
two studios ready for 2/15 lease

D.F. Burns Apartments: three studios offered for 2/1 lease

Weaver Apartments: two one bedrooms offered for 2/15 lease

TOTAL: 29 apartments

This represents 2% of all available elderly apartments.

* At 45 Linnean Street four (4) apartments have been vacated due to flooding problems. A specification to correct this situation will be bid in February with leasing of the apartments anticipated April 1, 1986.

E. Family Housing

Corcoran Park: one one bedroom reserved for transfer on 2/15
 two two bedrooms to be painted by 2/3, rented
 for 2/7
 one three bedroom seriously fire damaged; to be
 rented approximately 4/1

TOTAL: 4

Putnam Gardens: two two bedrooms not legally available until
 2/15

TOTAL: 2

Washington Elms: nine one bedrooms reserved for transfers during
 February
 one two bedroom handicapped unit offered for
 2/7 lease
 two three bedrooms reserved for transfers by
 2/15
 three four bedrooms, applicants in screening,
 two to be rented 2/15, one by 3/1

TOTAL: 15

Jefferson Park: Tower- one one bedroom offered for 2/7 lease
 three unrenovated one bedrooms to be leased
 for 2/15
 thirteen two bedrooms, four to be leased 2/15,
 three to be painted for 3/1 lease, 6 to be held
 for modernization emergency

TOTAL: 17

Newtowne Court: 28 one bedroom units, five of which are reserved
 for transfers as soon as floors are refinished
 approximately 3/15, two are ready for lease by
 2/7, three are unrentable because of roof
 leaks*, 18 require painting and floor
 refinishing; these should be ready during the
 month of May

21 two bedroom units, three of which are
 reserved for transfers pending floor
 refinishing by 3/15, 10 are unrentable
 because of roof and masonry leaks*,
 eight require floor refinishing and painting and
 should be available for occupancy during April
 and May

nine three bedroom units, three are unrentable because of masonry and roof leaks*, six are reserved for transfers pending floor refinishing and painting; should be available during March and April

TOTAL: 58

Roosevelt Towers: two one bedroom units to be leased by 2/15
five three bedroom units to be leased by 2/22

TOTAL: 7

GRAND TOTAL: 103

These vacancies constitute 8% of all of the family inventory.

Exclusive of Newtowne Court the vacancy rate is 3.5%.

* The installation of new roofs through the modernization program should be completed in the fall of 1986. As a result the 16 currently unrentable apartments will be ready for occupancy in fall of 1986.

IV. LINKAGE TRUST FUND

The CHA is not formally aware of the existence of a linkage trust fund. We believe that a linkage program should be established by the Council. Staff of the CHA served on Councillor David Sullivan's Inclusionary Zoning/Linkage committee last year and the CHA endorsed the proposal put forward by that committee.

The obstacles to the development of additional low and moderate income housing are, in our opinion: unwarranted community opposition, availability of sites, and cost. A linkage fund/program can deal directly with the last and, in theory, indirectly with sites, although inclusionary zoning seems a better mechanism.

Presumably a linkage trust fund would, whether administered by the CHA or not, be available to the CHA to acquire sites and to write down the costs of construction so that feasibility within federal and/or state cost guidelines could be attained.

The CHA is, of course, quite interested in participating in any formulation of a linkage program/trust fund. We were neither privy to nor consulted about the two most recent "linkage agreements" reported in the local newspapers.

Finally, I hope that this information is helpful and responsive to your concerns and those of the Council. If there are any further questions, please let me know.

Sincerely,


Daniel J. Wuenschel
Executive Director



City of Cambridge

16.

IN CITY COUNCIL

February 24, 1986

COUNCILLOR RUSSELL

ORDERED:

That the Cambridge Housing Authority submit periodic reports regarding vacancies in the various housing projects both regular and elderly every sixty days using the report outline contained in their communication to the City Council dated February 6, 1986.

In City Council February 24, 1986.
Adopted by the affirmative vote of 9 members.
Attest:- Paul E. Healy, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Paul E. Healy", written over a horizontal line.

Paul E. Healy, City Clerk.

Order #16 *86*

C. Russell order re: that the Cambridge Housing Authority submit periodic reports on vacancies in various housing projects, both regular & elderly every 60 days.

In City Council,

February 24, 1986

2/24/86

QSR
19 *9.*