



EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
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November 7, 1994

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 11, regarding an update of the Cambridge Housing Authority waiting list, received from Daniel J. Wuenschel, Executive Director of the Cambridge Housing Authority.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy", is written over a horizontal line.

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mev
attachment

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Robert W. Healy, City Manager
FROM: Daniel J. Wuenschel, Executive Director 
DATE: 3 November 1994
RE: Council Order #12 - dated 10/24/94 update of CHA Waitlist

This memorandum is intended to provide an interim reply to the above mentioned Council Order. I categorize this report as interim because:

- A) The CHA staff is currently examining all housing possibilities that the CHA may provide to displaced Cambridge residents as a result of the possible passage of the anti-rent control referendum (Question 9)

and

- B) The situation affecting placement of applicants currently on the waiting lists could change dramatically depending on the fate of Question 9.

In short, the Authority will undoubtedly seek to grant a very high priority to citizens actually displaced, through no fault of their own by an abrupt end to rent control and the assumed subsequent "economically motivated" evictions that might follow. Should such activity occur, evictees (would, like other emergencies (fire, etc.)), jump over those applicants currently on the waiting lists.

The current status of the CHA's waiting lists is as follows: (As of October 1, 1994)

	<u>Public Housing Family</u>	<u>Public Housing Elderly/Disabled</u>	<u>Section 8</u>
Cambridge Residents	1614	291	1029
Non-Residents	2270	837	1821
TOTAL	3884	1,128	2,850

It is noteworthy that the number on the family list has decreased somewhat in recent months (especially in the Cambridge resident category) as a result of two factors:

- 1) The CHA closed the family waiting list on June 1st; that is, we stopped taking all but emergency applications as of that date.
- 2) We have spent considerable time updating, screening and, preparing files from the Cambridge resident category which has also reduced this number somewhat.

It is also worth noting that the elderly/disabled, Cambridge resident number remains somewhat constant between 250 and 400 despite some movement off the list as a result of screening, ineligibility findings and voluntary withdrawals. The percentage of younger disabled residents on this list now exceeds 50%; however, quite recently we seen have an increase in elderly Cambridge applicants reacting (presumably) to the possible impending rent control crisis.

PLACEMENTS into Cambridge public housing over the past several years looks as follows:

	<u>Family</u>	<u>Elder/Disabled</u>	<u>Single Room Occupancy</u>
1991	119	143	Not Available
1992	102	135	90
1993	61	127	83
1994 to Sept. 1st	40	75	80

Certificates/Vouchers leased from the Section 8
waiting lists for same period - 35

The recent substantial decrease in placements in family housing from the waiting list is attributable to the need for CHA to access vacant units throughout our inventory as a relocation resource to accomodate the redevelopment efforts at Newtowne Court, \$17 million rehab and Roosevelt Towers \$13.5 million.

Off site relocation necessary to these two major endeavors is substantially complete which should free-up more "turnover" apartments to the waiting list and to emergencies.

A few items are generally worth noting here:

- 1) Since decent affordable private housing is less and less attainable, fewer people leave public housing ...thus turnover is reduced

- 2) Similarly, as the CHA continues to improve both the physical and social environments in its developments, fewer public housing residents chose to leave public housing ...particularly with the current uncertainties about the future of rent control.
- 3) Our Section 8 certificate and voucher lease-ups have dramatically decreased in recent months as landlords await the election-day decision on rent control.

In closing, the best way to reduce the waiting lists "waiting time" is to produce more affordable units through both the conventional public housing program and through Section 8. Prospects for the former are indeed modest ...like the proposed Garfield and Mass Avenue site and other small scale CHA development proposals. A more substantial site like the North Cambridge Trolley Yards would be a step forward. In two to three years when the final phases of Newtowne Court and Roosevelt Towers occur 100+ units should be available to the waiting list as well.

In the meantime, non-profits such as Homeowners Rehab, Inc., will be developing the Brookline Street Univeristy Park site which CHA is supporting with some 34 project based Section 8 units which will help somewhat. However, these modest gains can be obviated by an overall decreased participation in the Section 8 program by private landlords if rent control is abolished or substantially altered. Currently rent control serves as an incentive to landlords to dedicate units to the Section 8 certificate program under which apartments are exempted from rent control. Our fear is that absent rent control ...no such incentive exists.

Once the referendum question is voted and the initial "shakedown" occurs, I will be happy to provide another, more detailed assessment with further recommendations.

Consent Agenda #24 S 483

Response to an Awaiting Report Item
No. Eleven, regarding an update of
the CHA waiting list.

*for original see
1994 City Manager
Request # 159.*

In City Council,

November 7, 1994

Placed on file