



CITY OF
PORTLAND, OREGON
PORTLAND HOUSING BUREAU

Commissioner Nick Fish
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Dear community member:

Thank you for coming to the Portland Housing Bureau community meeting on March 30, to discuss the proposal for a community advocate role to help homeowners in North and Northeast Portland. I look forward to similar meetings in the future so that the new Portland Housing Bureau can better understand the real housing issues confronting Portlanders and how our programs can better respond.

As presented during the meeting, PHB funds existing programs to help people repair their homes and avoid displacement. We heard excellent feedback about the extent to which housing programs may not be reaching the unique racial and ethnic communities that make up North and North East Portland. We have already begun to respond to this feedback by sharpening our focus on an equity agenda that defines specific improvements in how PHB programs serve historically underserved communities of color. I look forward to sharing with the community our best ideas to achieve that improvement in the very near future.

We appreciate your feedback about the importance of establishing trust to reach members of communities of color on housing issues. We recognize that more work is necessary to coordinate outreach and referral efforts to better serve people in need. With the ongoing economic crisis fueling demand for all housing programs well beyond capacity, we understand the need to guard against putting people in line for programs that are already oversubscribed.

As you know, our specific focus at the meeting was to develop a program intended to better connect low-income senior homeowners with services that can help them retain their home. This approach was driven and influenced by the input presented by many of you over the last few months.

We have incorporated your input shared at the meeting (see attached meeting notes) into a Request for Proposals (RFP) that will fund a community-based advocate positing to provide culturally competent services for vulnerable homeowners who want preserve their investment in their home. The RFP also creates capacity to coordinate outreach to homeowners, with an eye toward improving the efficiency and effectiveness of all programs. We expect to release the RFP next week and to schedule a bidders meeting in NE Portland for those interested in proposing. We will send a link to the RFP and Notice of the Bidders Meeting as soon as they are published.

In addition, the Portland Housing Bureau also is in the process of reviewing all of its programs through an equity lens to ensure that we are reaching underserved communities of color. We're starting a strategic planning process that will take community input and assess community housing needs to capture long-standing and emerging housing issues that need PHB's attention and resources. Your participation in that planning effort will be vital to our success.

Very truly yours,

Margaret Van Vliet
Director, Portland Housing Bureau

cc: Commissioner Nick Fish

North/Northeast Homeowner Retention Meeting

March 30, 2010

Attendees:

Barrett Ebricht Karnes (REACH CDC), **Roy Jay** (Alliance of Minority Chambers/AACOC), **Tony Jones** (MCIP), **Halim Byron** (PEEPS Corps), **Joe Nunn** (AACOC), **Harvey Rice** (AACOC), **Sherry Burbach** (CEP), **Juanita Walton** (AACOC), **Maxine Fitzpatrick** (PRCI), **Gary Marschke** (PEEPS Corps), **Harold Williams** (CH2A), **Harold Williams Two** (CH2A), **Mary Ann Schwab** (SE Advocate), **Nicole Maher** (NAYA), **Edward Gutierrez** (Proud Ground), **Cathy Galbraith** (Bosco-Milligan), **Steven Rupert** (ICURAC), **Jonath Colon** (Hispanic Metro Chamber), **Bertha Ferran** (PDC Board), **Anastasia Howard** (REACH CDC), **Shoshana Cohen** (NECN)

Staff:

Margaret Van Vliet, **Andy Miller**, **Kate Allen**, **Andrea Matthiessen**, **Jon Gail**, **Maileen Hamto**, **David Sheern**, **Judith Mowry** (ONI), **Daniel Ledezma** (Comm Fish's Office)

Comments:

\$500,000 in ICURA Home Repair funds should be strategically targeted to those most immediately in need

The new pilot program should focus on coordination among all existing community-based organizations who can do both the outreach and identification of the priorities and critical needs.

Need to work on ideas for leverage, including utilizing stimulus funds, volunteer labor, interns, and other community resources.

Getting to seniors before foreclosure is the priority

Anything done through this program should target equity in service to minority communities.

PHB should take the time to reevaluate all their homeowner programs for the programs to better serve minority communities equitably. Find out what's not working and fix it.

This \$120,000 contract should not be used as an excuse to not fix the problems with the other programs.

Working with seniors and minority communities requires trust.

\$120,000 will not go far enough to address the problem.

The program should focus on quality over quantity. The program should fully help fewer homeowners rather than try to help lots of homeowners not as in-depth.

The broad set of homeowner programs is under-resourced. We need to properly resource all the programs to meet the need/demand.

Strict accountability is essential for any program. This pilot program needs to have specific outcome targets.

There needs to be a very clear set of criteria of what the community advocate is being asked to do.

PHB should consider using the \$120,000 to supplement other programs that are oversubscribed.

The scale of this new program is out of line with the actual need. Too few dollars for the amount of need.

Don't over-promise what this program can do – Don't set the organization/program up for failure.

PHB needs to listen to the whole story and then fund the appropriate amount of resources.

Need a holistic and collaborative approach to solving the issues.

PHB needs to identify the immediate needs and gaps in the system and fill them now.

People do need help getting through the system, hand-holding; help with paper work and applications.

The community doesn't realize how severe the problem really is. This program could collect data and raise awareness of the scope of the problem.

Medicaid claims on estates are large factor in loss of long-term homeownership in families.

Issues/Questions:

How long would the advocate stay engaged with a homeowner? The issues are complicated and can take a very long time to work out.

How can one person be effective in working in multiple minority communities?

Is this proposed new position a PHB staff position or contracted within the community?

What is the plan for sustainably funding this effort beyond the pilot stage?

How do contractors get on the list for the PHB Home Repair program? How can homeowners address problems with shoddy repair work?

What is the specific geography to be served? - Traditional definition of N/NE.

How will this program work if all the community programs have waiting lists? The advocate cannot build trust with a homeowner only to put them on the waiting list for a program and not solve their problems.

How and when would the pilot program be expanded?