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Agenda Item #
For Housing Authority Meeting of: May 20, 2019

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
HOUSING AUTHORITY

TO: HOUSING AUTHORITY COMMISSIONERS
FROM: REBECCA LANE, MANAGER
HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

SUBJECT: REVISION OF LIMITED PREFERENCE POLICY FOR DISASTER-AFFECTED FAMILIES ON THE HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM WAITING LIST

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Department of Housing and Community Services that the Housing Authority, by resolution, approve a revision to Chapter 4, Section 4-III.C. of the Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan which would revise the policy for the Waiting List Limited Preference for Disaster-Affected Families. The change would allow households displaced by the October 2017 wildfires from any Sonoma County address to qualify for the Limited Preference.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Administrative Plan is the major policy document guiding the ongoing administration of the federally-regulated Housing Choice Voucher program. Where allowed under law, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) permits local jurisdictions to establish policies pertaining to the program. In August 2018, the Housing Authority approved a change to the Waiting List policies to implement a Limited Preference for Disaster-Affected families. The Housing Authority partnered with the Rebuilding Our Community (ROC) center for referrals under this Limited Preference. Based on the ROC's ongoing assessment of fire survivors' resources and needs, the Housing Authority proposes to revise the Administrative Plan to eliminate the requirement that the household's pre-fire address be within the city limits of Santa Rosa.

BACKGROUND

The Department of Housing and Community Services administers the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program for the City of Santa Rosa Housing Authority. The HCV Program, formerly known as Section 8, is a federally-funded rental assistance program for qualifying extremely low and very low income households. The City of Santa Rosa

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Housing Authority has 1,888 vouchers under contract with HUD and approximately 5,860 households on the waiting list. The average wait time is seven to nine years from placement on the waiting list to the initial eligibility interview.

The City of Santa Rosa's waiting list is organized first by year of application and then by lottery. HUD allows Housing Authorities to set certain local preferences for selecting applicants from the waiting list, including general admission preferences for certain household circumstances. The City of Santa Rosa Housing Authority's Administrative Plan designates one general waiting list preference for families terminated from the City of Santa Rosa Housing Choice Voucher program due to insufficient funding. This preference was established in 2013 in preparation for the impact of sequestration.

HUD also permits limited waiting list preferences that set aside a certain number of vouchers for referrals through a partnering agency. Limited preferences do not re-order an existing waiting list and the Housing Authority may have its waiting list open only to households that qualify for the limited preference. Currently, the Santa Rosa Housing Authority has established one Limited Preference for Families Experiencing Homelessness, with 24 vouchers set aside for referral through the Sonoma County Continuum of Care/Coordinated Entry and one Limited Preference for Disaster-Affected Families with 48 vouchers set aside for referral through the ROC.

PRIOR HOUSING AUTHORITY REVIEW

On August 27, 2018, The Housing Authority Board of Commissioners approved a Limited Preference of 24 vouchers for families affected by the 2017 wildfires. On March 25, 2019, the Housing Authority Board of Commissioners approved an expansion of the Limited Preference for Disaster-Affected families from 24 vouchers to 48 vouchers.

ANALYSIS

The 48 vouchers for families impacted by the 2017 wildfires are set aside for referral through the ROC. This partnership ensures that disaster-affected families have access to housing location and navigation services, security deposit assistance and disaster case management. Vouchers have been issued to 18 families under this Limited Preference and an additional nine applications are under eligibility review.

The referral process established through the ROC provides for a thorough assessment and disaster recovery plan, which includes an inquiry into qualifying factors for disaster services. The existing policy for the disaster-related preference states that the vouchers are targeted for families "who were residing in the city limits of Santa Rosa as of the October 2017 wildfires (Major Disaster Declaration DR-4344) and experienced direct or indirect displacement as a result."

Data from the ROC assessments indicate that several families who remain in housing crisis were displaced from addresses in unincorporated Santa Rosa areas outside the

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city limits, such as Larkfield or the Mark West area. The Department of Housing and Community Services proposes a change to the policy allowing any Sonoma County address affected by the October 2017 wildfires to be eligible for referral through the ROC. This change, coupled with the additional vouchers set aside in March 2019, has the potential to address the unmet housing needs of all families who are still receiving assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Direct Housing program.

FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of this action does not have a fiscal impact on any Housing Authority funds. The funds are already allocated under the Housing Choice Voucher program.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, pursuant to CEQA Guideline section 15378.

COUNCIL/BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Summary of Administrative Plan Changes, May 2019
- Attachment 2 – Administrative Plan for the City of Santa Rosa Housing Authority, Chapter 4
- Resolution

CONTACT

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