

THE HRHA NEWSLETTER

News, announcements, and more from the
Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority



Bags of treats and pumpkins
ready for kids.
Franklin Heights Halloween
Drop In - October 2020

In this issue:

Major MtW Proposals.....	2
Executive Director's Note.....	2
Gathering Feedback.....	3
Franklin Heights Halloween.....	3
Contact & Board of Commissioners.....	4
Annual Giving Tree Initiative.....	4

Interested in subscribing? Questions?
Everett Brubaker
HRHA Communications Coordinator
ebrubaker@harrisonburgrha.com

Moving to Work (MtW)

At the start of 2019, HRHA submitted its application to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to become a Moving to Work (MtW) agency. If accepted, this designation would give HRHA flexibility in developing program plans that further participant self-sufficiency, cost savings, and increase housing choice. In late August 2020 HRHA was invited to submit a plan as part of Cohort #1 of the MtW expansion. We were given a few months to gather feedback from residents and participants, develop a plan, and hold a public engagement process. We got to work right away.

HRHA immediately assembled a team and started mapping out a process. Working groups began researching potential HUD program opportunities, two initial resident meetings were held, and notices went out to the 800+ households HRHA serves. Since the start we have continued to connect with residents, participants, community partners, and the public to develop our formal plan. Public comment on the plan closes November 16 and the board will move to approve shortly after.

After an incredibly difficult year for all we are excited about the opportunities to expand housing choice and self-sufficiency for our residents and participants. Thank you for joining us.

Major MtW Proposals

The entire Moving to Work Plan can be viewed on our website at
www.harrisonburgha.com/mtw



Increase Participant Self-Sufficiency

1. **Replace Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) escrow/savings model with incentive-based program.** Current participants earn escrow only when income increases (rent goes up) from initial rent at program start. In the proposed model, participants earn immediate cash incentives for reaching milestones related to income, finance, education, health, and other self-sufficiency goals.
2. **Transition to a participant-driven coaching model** that better supports and empowers participants in meeting their goals.
3. **Provide coaching support up to six months AFTER a participant graduates** from the FSS program.



Expand Housing Choice

1. **Landlord recruitment & retention efforts** to increase landlord participation.
2. **More help with the housing search**, including rental application fee aid and one-on-one support in locating affordable rentals, paid by utilizing funding flexibilities.
3. **Increased flexibility to project-based voucher (PBV) rental assistance.**
 - a) Remove limits to number of PBV units in property buildings.
 - b) Increase number of vouchers available to project-base.
 - c) Eliminate procurement process for HRHA owned units.



Improve Cost Effectiveness, Reduce Administrative Burden

1. **Accept partner agencies' inspections** to meet Housing Quality Standard (HQS) requirements.
2. **Reduce the frequency of household certifications** to allow participants to keep more of their income increases, and to reduce the burden on both participants and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) specialists in acquiring, submitting and processing paperwork. Changes include switching to a triennial certification schedule and limiting interim certifications to one annually.
3. **Simplify rent calculations:**
 - a) Increase the elderly/disabled allowance and eliminate medical expenses deductions. This lowers tenant payment for vast majority of participants, saving both time and money for participants and HRHA. Hardship exceptions allowed for any participant where this change would create a rent burden.
 - b) Increase the dependent allowance and eliminate child care deductions. Similar results and exemptions above apply.
 - c) Simplify the utility allowance schedule.
 - d) Only require documentation of assets over \$50,000.
4. **Increase the portability term in Franklin Heights** units from one year to two years.

Executive Director's Corner



HRHA is appreciative and excited for the opportunity that participating in the Moving to Work (MtW) program will provide for our residents, participants, and the community at large. We anticipate that the flexibility provided by becoming a MtW agency, and the ability to implement innovative housing policies to address local need, will greatly improve and increase housing access, self-sufficiency outcomes and cost effectiveness.

To help shape the plan, we encourage all residents, participants, and interested community members to provide input and comment on the proposed changes. In addition to the scheduled events this Fall, opportunities will be available in early Spring including participation in an advisory group.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions concerning our MtW plan.

- Michael Wong

Gathering Feedback from Residents, Participants, & the Community

A major component of the Moving to Work (MtW) proposal is gathering feedback from residents of HRHA properties, participants in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, community stakeholders, and the public at large. HRHA began planning opportunities for public input shortly after receiving notice to submit an MtW plan in late August. Immediately, all residents and participants were mailed a notice about HRHA's intent to participate in MtW. We established a web page dedicated to MtW (harrisonburgrha.com/mtw), began regular Facebook postings, and developed a survey for residents and participants. Two initial information session calls took place in September, two sessions for the board of commissioners early October, after which HRHA released our initial proposal October 16. The proposal release kicked off a 30-day comment period, and a public hearing was held October 16 at Harrisonburg City Chambers.

In October we held additional meetings, sent the plan to community partners, and continued reaching out to residents and participants. We held a comment call in session at 6pm October 29 for HCV participants and a Halloween event (with MtW information and comment opportunity) on October 30 for Franklin Heights residents. On November 5, we organized a focus group of residents and participants to provide feedback on the various plan elements. Over a dozen persons have agreed to participate in the group, representing a mix of languages, ethnicities, family statuses, and, income.

We will continue to invite and gather feedback even after the board moves to approve the plan mid-November, through Spring 2021 and beyond as plan elements continue coming together.

Franklin Heights Halloween Drop-In

The Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) coordinators planned a Halloween drop-in on October 30 for residents in HRHA's Franklin Heights. Stephanie, a resident of Franklin Heights (FH), did all the decorating, creating webs, stringing lights, and more to create a fun and safe Halloween atmosphere. One at a time, each family had the opportunity for a household picture (on polaroid to take home), pick a pumpkin and treat bag, and (for adults) to connect with an FSS coordinator to learn more about Moving to Work (MtW) and provide comment if interested. We had over two dozen families come through with over 40 kids.



Cora (left) and kids outside the Reservoir Office. Patience (below) with her very own winter squash.

All photos used with permission.



FH resident Stephanie (above) did ALL the decorating for the event. Thank you Stephanie!





Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority

Contact Us

+ *HRHA Main Office*

286 Kelley St

PO Box 1071 (22803)

Harrisonburg VA, 22802

Phone: (540)-434-7386

Fax: (540)-432-1113

+ *HRHA Reservoir Office*

FSS Program, HMIS, COC

143 Reservoir St

Harrisonburg VA, 22801

Phone: (540)-437-9545

Fax: (540)-432-1113

+ *HRHA Commerce Village*

Waiting List & Applications

Phone: (540)-615-5557

Fax: (540)-615-5558

+ *HRHA Lineweaver & Annex*

Phone: (540)-433-0788

Website



www.harrisonburgrha.com

Facebook



[@harrisonburgrha](https://www.facebook.com/harrisonburgrha)

HRHA Board of Commissioners

HRHA is governed by a seven-member Board of Commissioners appointed by the Harrisonburg City Council. The Board establishes the Authority's policies and procedures and appoints the Executive Director.

Board of Commissioner meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 4:00PM, now at the Harrisonburg City Chambers at 409 South Main St.

+ Michael Wong, (Not a commissioner)
Executive Director/Secretary-Treasurer

+ John Hall – Chair

Term Expires: November 29, 2021

+ Costella Forney – Vice Chair

Term Expires: November 29, 2022

+ Scott Gallagher – Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2020

+ Christine Fasching Maphis - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29 2022

+ Dany Fleming - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2023

+ Kevin Coffman - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2023

+ Luciano Benjamin - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2024

A Gift for Every Child

The holiday season can be stressful on families, particularly as loved ones wrestle with the cost of providing gifts for their children. Since 2007, HRHA has partnered with the Valley Mall to provide Holiday Gift Assistance for family members in our Family Self-Sufficiency Program. Dozens of community members and groups take a child's name each year, donating toys, clothes, and gift cards to children living in affordable housing. **From November 10 through December 12, you can choose a child's name from the Giving Tree at the Valley Mall (Santa's Workshop) or at Agora Market downtown, our new partner this year.** You may also call the FSS Office at 540-437-9545. All gifts are due by December 13. Thank you for your support!

