

THE HRHA NEWSLETTER

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



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Becoming a Better Agency



Since our initial application to become a Moving to Work (MtW) agency over two years ago, our team has wrestled with what major changes we could implement that would have the most impact: increasing participant self-sufficiency, reducing burden on residents, participants, and staff, and expanding housing opportunities. We have connected with multiple housing agencies across the country, held two public engagement processes, and conducted research as teams to build and refine our MtW proposals. Presentation of our final MtW plan to the HRHA Board of Commissioners will happen August 18, 2021, followed by the final 45 day comment period. We are excited to begin implementing these changes.

Thank you for being part of the process. Your suggestions, questions, ideas, and insight helped us refine these proposals to maximize impact, efficiency, and effectiveness. Thank you for continuing to work with us as implementation begins over the next few months.

Interested in subscribing? Questions?
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Refining MtW Proposals

Since approval in April 2021, HRHA has worked hard to further develop, improve, and finalize agency wide changes associated with our Moving to Work (MtW) designation. A major part of this process involves gathering feedback from residents, participants, and community partners.

Over the last two months, HRHA has hosted call in sessions, zoom meetings, conducted calls to participants and residents, sent out mailings in multiple languages, and more. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, though we did make a number of refinements based on feedback. A few of these refinements are highlighted below.

MtW Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Proposals

A major MtW change with FSS involves the transition away from an escrow/savings model based on increases in rent at start of program and adoption of a clearer, incentive/rewards based savings model. Based on community and participant feedback, HRHA increased incentive amounts for educational achievements like obtaining a GED, certifications, or associates degree. We also added additional incentive opportunities connected to family self-sufficiency such as getting an annual physical and attending parenting classes. Language was also clarified around requirements and incentive earnings that were seen as vague. Overall, community partners and FSS participants were excited and supportive of the proposed changes to the FSS program.

Other HRHA Proposals

We received strong support for the majority of our changes to the certification process, rent policies, landlord recruitment, and other initiatives. Some feedback surrounded concerns for increases in rent and/or loss of certain deductions (ex: childcare) when calculating rent. We clarified that there are safe harbor policies in place and additional proposals meant to balance the increases in rent and loss of certain deductions (such as moving to triannual certification so participants keep more of their earned income). Overall, feedback was supportive of our proposals.



Sisters Rosie (left) and Monika Sackett (right) pose with the posters they submitted for VAHCDO's annual "What Home Means to Me" contest. Monika won 2nd place in the middle school category for Virginia. Her poster was sent on for regional competition at the June 2021 SERC conference.

VAHCDO is the Virginia Association of Housing & Community Development Officials.

Executive Director's Corner



Purpose and passion is what brings success. It is not just about achievement or accomplishment, it's the recognition that through service we can make a difference with the individuals we serve and our community.

I am fortunate to work with a talented and dedicated group of individuals that are mission driven and are willing to share their passion for making a difference. Although this past year has been filled with many challenges and changes, HRHA staff continued to strive on a daily basis to make a difference through their positive interactions and service. Purpose and passion continue to be the key to success. Please join me in thanking all of the staff for their dedication and commitment.

- Michael Wong

Moving to Work Next Steps

- July 1, 2021: HRHA finances were converted to MTW status allowing for financial flexibility.
- August 18, 2021: HRHA will present its annual plan and MtW narrative for Board approval and start of 45 day comment period. Following comment period, HRHA will submit Annual plan and MTW activities to HUD for approval.
- October 2021 - Spring 2022: HRHA will initiate MtW activities.

Staff Highlight: Chuck

HRHA manages a variety of programs, grants, and initiatives. We serve hundreds of families through housing vouchers, programs like Family Self-Sufficiency, and city-wide campaigns. Through 2021, we plan to highlight members of the HRHA team who make this work possible.

1. When did you start at HRHA and what brought you to the Housing Authority?

I joined HRHA in December 2018 to conduct inspections of apartments and rental properties. I am grateful for the benefits available to staff and the stability.

2. What is your role with HRHA?

I am the home "inspector" for our office. I inspect all new properties and I perform the annual inspections to make sure Housing Quality Standards (HQS) are met. The federal government requires inspections before assistance can be paid on behalf of a family, and then annually through the lease, to help ensure our clients are renting safe and decent homes.



3. What project or partnership have you been most proud of during your time with HRHA?

I am still looking for that pet project. I am certain it will actually have to do with language and communication.

4. What do you love to do outside of work?

I am all about my family and my dog Butters. I am also a musician with a newly acquired love of Bluegrass!

5. Are there any upcoming projects or partnerships that you are excited about?

I am excited about how new technology will play a role in the inspection process. There is cool new tech to check on roofs or under homes via drones for example. This month I am using zoom to conduct an inspection. The tenant is unable to get vaccinated for medical reasons so we are using zoom to conduct the inspection safely.

6. What do you wish more people in our community knew about affordable housing, our families, or the voucher program?

For inspections, I think it's important that people know that inspections are about inspecting the unit, not inspecting the tenant. We are not looking for how messy a person lives for example, but ensuring their apartment or home is decent and safe. I ensure smoke alarms are properly working, windows and doors properly open, shut, and lock, and more.

"We Needed a Party"

Laura Remington, who has lived at HRHA's Commerce Village for over two years, had a sense that it was time for a celebration. When the pandemic hit, Commerce Village stopped their monthly community meals, often sponsored by local organizations. With resident vaccinations completed, Laura fronted her own money to bring in a catered fried chicken meal from Wood Grill Buffet.

When asked what prompted her generosity Laura replied, "It's been silence. We've been waiting all this time....we needed a party."



Laura Remington (left), resident at Commerce Village. June 22, 2021. Commerce Property Manager Sandra (above) serves food to residents.



Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority

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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.

Meeting location/access will be posted prior to meetings and in line with local health guidelines.

+ Michael Wong, (Not a commissioner)

Executive Director/Secretary-Treasurer

+ Dany Fleming - Chair

Term Expires: November 29, 2023

+ Scott Gallagher – Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2020

+ Christine Fasching Maphis - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2022

+ Kevin Coffman - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2023

+ Luciano Benjamin - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2024

+ Gil Colman - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2021

Call for Back to School Supplies

Each year with community help, HRHA helps children get the supplies they need to start the school year off prepared and excited. This year feels extra urgent as students resume in-person learning. We'd love your help ensuring they are ready for the year.

Items to donate include pencils, paper, folders, backpacks, scissors, colored pencils/crayons, calculators, and other school essentials. You can drop off donations anytime between 9am and 4pm at the HRHA Reservoir St Office: 143 Reservoir Street in Harrisonburg. Thank you!

