

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Portsmouth Housing Authority

March 10, 2005, 6:30 p.m.

Conference Room A

City Council Present: Mayor Sirrell, Assistant Mayor Grasso, Councilors Ferrini, Pantelakos, Hynes, and Whitehouse

City Council Absent: Councilors Marchand, Raynolds, and St. Laurent

Officials Present: City Manager Bohenko, City Attorney Sullivan, George Robinson, Executive Director of Portsmouth Housing; Portsmouth Housing Authority Commissioners Ruth Griffin, Anita Freedman, John Leith, and Albert Charest

I. Call to Order

Mayor Sirrell opened the work session at 6:30 p.m. and passed the introduction to City Manager Bohenko.

City Manager explained that the City Council called this work session with the Portsmouth Housing Authority in order to discuss issues regarding elderly concerns. City Manager Bohenko introduced George Robinson, Executive Director of Portsmouth Housing Authority.

II. Residents Concerns

Mayor Sirrell stated that she has spoke with George Robinson and the snow shoveling issues have been resolved. Mr. Robinson stated that they have extended the time to allow residents to move their vehicles. He also stated that they attempt to contact the owner prior to any vehicle being towed. He advised the City Council that a vehicle would only be towed as a last resort.

Councilor Pantelakos asked if it was possible to have a maintenance person assist the elderly with cleaning and moving their vehicles. Mr. Robinson stated that there are over 400 vehicles involved and the liability to the Portsmouth Housing Authority should a vehicle get damaged would be high. Councilor Pantelakos stated that she had received calls from residents who expressed concerns with individuals that have had drug and alcohol issues living in the same building as the elderly. Mr. Robinson stated that they are working in conjunction with the Portsmouth Police Department to remove individuals that are causing problems. He also reported that the Housing Authority is assisting those individuals in seeking new housing.

Mayor Sirrell stated that she and the Council are receiving calls from residents regarding housing issues that need to be handled by the Housing Authority. Mr. Robinson explained the chain of command within the Housing Authority for the residents to voice their concerns.

Assistant Mayor Grasso suggested that the Portsmouth Housing Authority provide residents with a laminated card with contact information for residents with problems, concerns or complaints. Mr. Robinson stated that he is working on an information sheet, which will be placed on each door with important phone numbers and information of the residents to assist medical and police in an emergency, and they could also list Housing Authority numbers.

III. Section 8 Voucher Update

Mr. Robinson stated that he provides vouchers for 406 families presently. These Section 8 vouchers are given to the families and are used to subsidize their rent at privately owned apartments who agree to abide by this program. These owners can opt out of the program and more and more are starting to do so. He stated that these vouchers are Federal Housing and Urban Development funds. He advised the City Council that the funding he receives is drastically shrinking.

IV. Lafayette School Update

Mr. Robinson advised the City Council that he is currently working on the request for proposals and he would report back to the City Council upon completion.

V. General Discussion

City Manager Bohenko advised the City Council that the City Staff and Portsmouth Housing Authority work together on many issues and have a great working relationship. He said that Mr. Robinson has always been very cooperative and helpful when his assistance has been needed.

VI. Adjournment

At 7:15 p.m., Mayor Sirrell closed the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by:
Dianne M. Kirby, Deputy City Clerk