

Virtual Public Hearing
Vermont Draft HUD 2022 Annual Action Plan
April 8, 2022

Organizers/Presenters: Arthur Hamlin, DHCD; Ari Kisler, AHS; Ann Kroll, DHCD; Josh Hanford, Commissioner DHCD; Sarah Phillips, AHS; Ron Rupp, VHCB; Nathan Cleveland, DHCD.

Participants: Debbie Ingram, Emily Sikorski, Grace Vinson, Martin Hahn, Maryellen Griffin, Megan Roush, Rachel Batterson, Sofia Benito Alston, Susan Whitmore, Tammy Santamore.

Welcome

Arthur Hamlin welcomed participants and had the meeting presenters introduce themselves.

Purpose

Arthur reviewed that the purpose of the hearing is to receive comments on the State's draft HUD 2022 Annual Action Plan, which outlines the State's goals and priorities for approximately \$11 million in federal funds provided to Vermont under the Community Development Block Grant, HOME Investment Partnership Program, and Emergency Solutions Grant program, which is used with AHS' Housing Opportunity Program for shelter and services for homeless Vermonters, and \$3 million awarded to the State from the National Housing Trust Fund, which is used for rental housing for very-low income Vermonters. The plan also serves as Vermont's application to HUD for these funds. The draft plan is available on the Department's website.

Changes

Arthur reviewed proposed changes to the plan which are minimal this year. The Vermont Community Development Program proposes to change the Access Modification (AM) grant set-aside to \$300,000 and the Planning Grant (PG) target \$360,000. AM awards are to make municipally owned buildings accessible to persons with disabilities. PG awards are often used in preparation for implementation grants for housing or community development projects.

Testimony received at hearing

Maryellen Griffin testified on three points: First, to continue increasing goal of new housing units for the homeless from 15 to at least 25. Maryellen noted that the plan states how many people were provided shelter. Second, give preference to projects that are low barrier to entry and have low eviction rates. These are unrestricted (not targeted) with limited admission criteria. Most criteria used are allowed but not required. A low rate of eviction is good way to show provider has good support and policies to prevent homelessness. Maryellen testified this will ensure that the funds best serve people who are homeless or at risk and affirmatively further fair housing. Third, give preference to projects where there is a strong working relationship with service providers. Maryellen noted that the plan acknowledges that the State has good record and DHCD encourages this. To solidify our gains in this area, Vermont should give preference to providers who are actively pursuing service provider relationships.

Maryellen noted that the plan specifically prioritizes service enriched housing. It should also prioritize providers with relationship with outside provider to avoid segregating people with disabilities into certain housing. Maryellen thanked the DHCD for listening to her comments.

Discussion

Nathan Cleveland commented that the agency is working on updating the Analysis of Impediments (AI) to Fair Housing and is reaching out to HUD to get guidance on how best to update the AI to have a larger and more in depth analysis for the next five year Consolidated Plan process.

Maryellen added that she hopes that includes zoning. DHCD affirmed that is included. Arthur added that Plan includes a Barriers to Affordable Housing section. Ann Kroll noted that zoning is major topic for Agency and will continue to pursue and take comments.

Arthur noted that written comments will also be accepted until 4:30 p.m. on Monday, May 9, 2022, and should be addressed to, Arthur Hamlin, Housing Program Coordinator, Department of Housing and Community Development, 1 National Life Drive, Davis Building, 6th Floor, Montpelier, VT 05620-0501, or email arthur.hamlin@vermont.gov.

Hearing adjourned at 2:00 PM.