

**PRESENTATION OF FY 2010 ANNUAL AGENCY PLAN  
AND FY 2010-2014 FIVE YEAR PLAN  
OCTOBER 29, 2009  
HUNTSVILLE HOUSING AUTHORITY**

**SUMMARY OF COMMENTS**

We have described below the general nature of the comments received from the participants at the Public Hearing on the FY2010-2014 Five Year Plan and 2010-2011 Annual Agency Plan for the Huntsville Housing Authority, held at the Oscar Mason Center on October 29, 2009. We have attempted to provide word-for-word recital, however, this summary is intended to be a description of the substance of each comment rather than verbatim. If we have misunderstood any comments, please submit a comment card with corrections. This summary of comments should include the full range of comments on the proposed issues received the evening of October 29, 2009.

*Chairman Burruss:* We will now begin the public hearing on the agency five-year plan and the 2010-2011 Agency annual plan. That plan will be presented by Ms. Carlen Williams and I ask your indulgence with her presentation.

*Carlen Williams:* Thank you very much. The HHA agency plan is submitted annually to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD guidelines prescribe this process and requirements include meeting with the Resident Advisory Board, a 45-day notice period and publication of the draft plan.

*Unknown Male:* Excuse Ms. Williams, I did turn microphone off -- if you would, turn the mike on.

*Carlen Williams:* Do we need it?

*Unknown Male:* I think so, yes.

*Carlen William:* Planning for the 2010 plan began in July. We conducted in-house physical needs assessments at our sites and reviewed our management processes. This year we will also submit our five-year plan so new goals and objectives were set for the coming years. Public comments will be accepted for inclusion in the plan and will be addressed in the plan. A final plan will be prepared and presented to the board for approval at the next board meeting.

I will walk you through now the proposed or draft five-year plan and agency plan. This is a fairly new template from HUD, it is again a template, and to show that this is the five-year and annual

plan we checked that box. There is some additional information for this submission and I will walk through that.

[Plan was read to the audience section by section.]

*Chairman Burruss:* Thank you very much Ms. Williams. We will now open for public comments, limited to three minutes, on our five-year and annual plan for 2010, 2014. Yes sir?

*Audience:* Just a real quick question: I didn't understand the timeframe of which this plan is going to be provided to the public for comments. I heard 45 days -- does it start today, tomorrow, next week? What is the timeframe of all those things?

*Carlen Williams:* It has been posted for more than 45 days already. It's already been posted for more than 45 days, which is the notice period prior to the public hearing.

*Audience:* And so now what happens?

*Chairman Burruss:* There will be an additional week or so to get any written comments to the plan that --

*Audience:* You can get this online at the library?

*Carlen Williams:* You can get it online on the Housing Authority website; there's a copy at the library.

*Chairman Burruss:* And at each public housing site.

*Audience:* Okay.

*Chairman Burruss:* And we welcome your comments for inclusion to the plan. Are there comments from the public?

*Jackie Reed:* [Inaudible]

*Chairman Burruss:* This is not an exchange of questions, this is public comments.

*Jackie Reed:* You can't answer any questions?

*Chairman Burruss:* No ma'am. Please take the podium.

*Jackie Reed:* How can you comment in only three minutes when it's a major, major issue?

*Chairman Burruss:* You have three minutes. Please go right ahead.

*Jackie Reed:* I would like to have seen a copy of this before you started tonight. [Inaudible] because I would be on governments' tales constantly. But anyway, my question is, when I called down in Birmingham to the director of the Housing Authority as to how they approve all of this stuff that you all send down there, he says to me -- I told him it was pretty bad up here, but he says to me that you all send it down there and then he approves it and he don't have one thing to do with it. Yes, he signs what you all agree on up here in Huntsville, Alabama; they don't go over it and wooly-wool it and I said, "Have you ever been to Huntsville, he said yes a few times to come and let you tell them what you are doing, but you all are accountable for what's going on in this city -- you -- you, this Board here, 'cause I called that man, and I talked to him very strongly. So it's you all, the mayor and the city godfathers and officials of this city that's causing the chaos in the city. And when you're moving people out of foreclosed homes, that's discrimination. I don't care if you're black or white, that is wrong that foreclosed homes are not being given money to buy properties. And when you tell me about flood mitigation you talking to the wrong one about flood mitigation downtown. I've been going 20 years and that city and that mayor who appointed maybe this director here -- I don't know that -- I don't know how you operate, but I think you need to clean the board up and start over. I'd like to be on this board. But flood mitigation when you tell me Searcy Homes have to be torn down, that is wrong right there 'cause the mayor wanted that property then. Flood mitigation -- it's like they tell whatever government they want to tell, they come to you all -- this is all a made up mayor thing, this is a made-up thing from government officials -- you knew what this was gonna do. I blame each and every one of you with what's going wrong in this city. And to finance private homes, tearing down public housing, but I don't know where all they are, but why don't you put some of that money -- thousands of people right here, homeless, waiting to get into public housing. Why are we on a waiting list? Buildings downtown at Searcy Homes across the street from the homes that was torn down, and you're going to tear down every one of those homes downtown? You can't answer that? Okay. When do you have an answering session when you answer the questions is what I want to know. I mean you don't have to answer me but I'm not ever going to let you go, but that's ridiculous that you don't let the public know what's going on -- I ask for copies, I have no copies of what goes on. But anyway I hear your meetings are in the middle of the day, when I work. At least you can change when the public can come and know what you're doing, but you are to blame, you and the city

officials of this city -- the man in Birmingham has nothing to do with what you're doing up here in Huntsville. He assured me that was true. You all send it to him, you guarantee him everything you're telling him how those people, and you're doing right and this and that and the other, which I doubt if every a lawyer looked into it. I just believe it's you all's baby and he tells me that he signs what you all send down there -- he trusts you. I never trust a board, not a city official, not a government elected official and not the people they appoint. Thank you. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Yes ma'am?

*Audience:* I have a real quick question: when is the next board meeting? I hear people keep saying, "Well at our next board meeting," when is it?

*Chairman Burruss:* It's the third Monday of each month at noon at this location. This board meets to conduct the business of Huntsville Housing Authority.

*Audience:* Can I ask you why Noon? Why Noon? You can't answer that?

*Chairman Burruss:* There have been several reasons that Noon has been the most optimum time for us over the past couple years. This organization is subject to the open meeting law of the State of Alabama. All of our meetings are public and anyone is welcome to come. Yes sir?

*Matthew Thomas:* I just have a quick comment. This is the first time I've come to one of these.

*Chairman Burruss:* I'm sorry, your name sir?

*Matthew Thomas:* Matthew Thomas, I'm a resident down in the Chaffey neighborhood; this came to my attention as a result of the Chaffey situation. And I just have one question, which I understand nobody can answer here. I don't understand why my tax dollars are being used to support people's preferences. I don't have a problem with helping people, but I have a serious problem if anyone in the city, the county, the nation or the world has a preference -- they have an obligation to go out and get it themselves. As far as a need, I support all the efforts of the Huntsville Housing Authority in providing the needs, but when I hear things like "preferences" and "their goals," I am perplexed, and I'm outraged. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Yes sir?

*Rev. Al Garrett:* Do you really need to find my way back up here?

*Chairman Burruss:* Please, there are some people at the back of the room.

*Rev. Al Garrett:* Okay. Ms. Williams, thank you for your report. The reason that individuals -- and it is my fiftieth prayer that I can say this and it does not come out either accusatory or like-- well I'm not pointing my finger -- that's the main point. But again, I have to I guess go back to my question again -- where was she? Listen, if you had been interested in HUD in the Huntsville Housing Authority, all this information is available, and you could have found this out years ago and be participating in this process, not any differently than going to a city council meeting or going to a school board meeting. So I think it's disingenuous to now act as though this board has been operating in some type of secrecy. It has not. It's been running the Huntsville Housing Authority for as long as the Huntsville Housing Authority has been a part of the City of Huntsville.

So again, one comment -- well maybe two: you mentioned -- well maybe I shouldn't direct this to you, Ms. Williams, but it was mentioned in your report about "improving internal and external image," and this is the second meeting I've been in this week with a somewhat similar problem, and earlier this week I was talking to someone about Title One schools. And I was saying to them "how is it that people get such an awful perception when they hear the words Title One schools?" Immediately all these negative things come to mind and there seems to be a similar problem when someone hears the words either "HUD", "housing authority", "Section 8", or bounty. There is just this negative impression that seems to be laid out.

And so what I hope to say is if there is in fact anything that I could possibly do -- and lord only knows what that might be, to help improve the image, let me know. The one thing that you have I think coming up, Miss, don't you have a community-wide celebration coming up or community [crosstalk]? I don't know if it would be helpful to invite the community, I don't know, but I know I'm excited about it and was looking forward to it, hoping that the weather maybe clears up so it is everything that you hope it to be. But again I say thank you for what you do for Huntsville.

*Chairman Burruss:* Thank you again for your comments. Are there other comments?

*Audience:* Where is your county-wide celebration?

*Board members:* [Crosstalk]

*Chairman Burruss:* Okay, Ms.?

*Rosa Toussaint Ortiz:* Rosa Maria Toussaint Ortiz, again, and for those of you that were here you heard part of my life story in relations to housing I wasn't able to finish it because my three minutes were up [laughter].

The first thing is for those of us that believe in prayer we need to be praying for those living on the south side and for the whole city - we need to be praying. I want to remind everyone that God is watching. He is love, but he's also consuming fire. In the past He killed all the first-born sons of the Egyptians, He opened up the earth and killed hundreds of people in one moment, and He has burned cities. God is such a good God that He would allow tornadoes and other natural disaster to get people's attention and changed their hearts.

Sometimes He allows cancer, heart attacks and strokes to come to our lives with a purpose of make us more humble and to help us to see the big picture and understand that every city belongs to Him. Let's not forget about Lazarus and the rich man. Let's don't forget this: what we do in this life will follow us through eternity. I want to thank God for having the Housing Authority Agency ready to help me when I was in need in 1987. Neither my children nor I have had any problems with the law. My daughter that was born in the project, she is in the U.S. Army, she is a soldier serving our country, and my son he behave like a son of God, and he's very involved in helping the youth in this community through his church.

Friends, if you are living in the projects, you don't have to feel ashamed. God is asking you today: let me restore your dignity. Understand this: if you are connected with God through Jesus, you are citizen of heaven and you have a mansion, a luxury home, waiting for you in heaven. And I hope that all of us here present and everybody will be able to be there also with us.

And I want to say one more thing: and this lady said something very important: that was about diversity, and somebody asks her "What about those people that don't want to change?" Because you try to get people to change and to be nice, and she said, "You know we just wait for them to die." So that's just reality. That's just reality. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Yes sir?

*Willie Hereford:* That is something she said that we have been talking about earlier. We all -- we go to work, we work together. But on Sunday mornings we are separated, go to different churches. We are serving the same God -- do you serve a different God? Now I can understand if you're serving a different God why you would go to a different church, but if we are serving the same God, if we can't get together on Sunday in church, we can be separated. But we can work together; we can go to clubs together and party together.

Now when we go to heaven, is that a separation, white, black, Jew, whatever? There's no separation. I just want to mention that. And another thing I wanted to say also is -- there's a lot of things I would like to say, but it just -- I'm a firm believer before you demolish anything, build something. You got hundreds of people on the waiting list. What you going to buy these houses for and don't have a place to put them? And if you're gonna put somebody somewhere, check that out first before you stick us in there. Be straight up -- that's what I think. I would not demolish no Searcy Homes-- there ain't nothing wrong with those apartment on Pollard Circle. And the flood problem, that bridge was widened out 12 years ago. What flood problem? They're out of their heads. And they talked about a train derail? They ain't had no train derails out there? [Applause]. Thank you. When I came back in '50 something, I stood up at the Coty Council meeting. Mr. Showers told it right here, a sermon at meeting; I knew things like that was gonna happen here in Huntsville. I tried to come here in Huntsville, stood up at the city council meeting. Let's try to avoid this happening, people sleeping on park benches, cardboard boxes and everything. We don't need this here in Huntsville. Them people's out there in the winter time, sleeping in boxes. This is Huntsville. You can send a man to the moon but you can't put a family in a house. There's something wrong. And that's it straight up. I would be embarrassed as anything when you've got people sleeping out there. I go -- my group we feed peoples under that bridge over there, and I just can't understand how they can live that way. That's it. We fix chili beans, spaghetti. We just cook things and go over there and sit with them and give them wool to try to help keep them warm. And you're in a high tech city. When we fail to do what we are doing now, and you're expecting jobs to come in here? Ain't nobody want to come in here when we're not together. You're hurting your own self, and that be straight up.

*Chairman Burruss:* Thank you. [Applause]. Are there any other comments? Yes sir? Please share your name. Please use the microphone.

*Jerry Mitchell:* My name is Jerry Mitchell, Huntsville resident. I noted that in Ms. Williams' report she referred to the Housing Authority as an exceptional performer, which I think is great. My comment is regarding Section 3. I want to make sure and just state for the record that I want to make sure that Housing Authority is an exceptional performer. Regards to Section 3: Section 3 provides economic opportunities for local low-income and very low income people. In the wake of jobs relative to HUD funds and Housing Authorities receive and I guess my biggest concern and reason that I have a comment is that recently when we reviewed the most current data for FY2008 we found out that our state does not have a good track record relative to compliance with Section 3. Of the 144 public housing authorities that receive HUD funds in our state, only four were compliant. So I want to see that our Housing Authority is an exceptional performer, we want to be applying for a Hope Six grant and we're gonna be doing the gateway construction pretty soon and this is an opportunity -- most housing authorities talk about creating self-sufficiency and economic empowerment; this is a chance to do it with jobs and with contracts to Section 3 residents and Section 3 housing. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Are there other comments? Again, on behalf of the Board of Commissioners of Huntsville Housing Authority and the staff I'd like to thank you all for your presence here tonight, for your interest in public housing, and let me say that there have been some extremely positive and productive comments presented tonight. I would employ each of you who wish to have your comments become a part of this plan to submit those comments in writing to the Huntsville Housing Authority by next Friday.

*Audience 9:* Excuse me, do you have an address?

*Chairman Burruss:* I do: Huntsville Housing Authority, 200 East Washington Street. It is on the website and I thought it would be on this agenda, but that's actually the location for this meeting.

*Audience 9:* Can it be emailed?

*Chairman Burruss:* Yes it can. Just go to the website and it'll link you to wherever you need to email. All right? There being no further comments, particularly due to the lateness of the hour I will declare that this public hearing is closed.

*[End of Audio]*