

**PRESENTATION OF THE SIGNIFICANT AMENDMENT  
TO FY 2009 ANNUAL 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 Significant Amendment to the FY 2009 Annual 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 apologize that we don't have adequate seating for everyone, but we're delighted to have you here and I'm going to, at this point, call this public hearing-- first two public hearings to be conducted this evening to order, and we would ask -- we certainly appreciate the interest that is shown by the residents here this evening. I've been serving on this commission now for six years and I've been at several of these public hearings and I think I'm probably stretching it a little bit to say that there may have been 20 people at most at any public hearing. So I'm delighted to know that there's indeed a clear interest in providing quality public housing in this community.

This is indeed a public hearing -- this is not designed for an exchange. We're going to provide you with information on two plans that we have for public housing in this community. There will be time for comments from the public for each of those plans. We welcome your comments. I believe I'm correct in saying that your comments will be recorded, and that in addition the comments -- if you have comments that you would like to have included or attached to these plans they must be submitted in writing to the Huntsville Housing Authority and they will be incorporated. We're allowing a week from today for those written comments to go into the Huntsville Housing Authority for inclusion with the public plans.

First of all this evening we will be presenting an amendment to the FY2009-2010 agency annual plan for substantive changes, and we'll begin that with a presentation from Ms. Shirley Whitten.

*Shirley Whitten:*

Hello everyone. Is the mic working? No? Is that better? All right, I'll try to talk as loud as I can here. The amendment that I'm presenting this afternoon concerns a proposed change to our admissions and continued occupancy policy, also known as the ACOP.

The ACOP provides the guidelines to stand, to implement HUD regulation concerning admissions to public housing and continued occupancy. The section that I want to talk about today is the Tenant Selection and Assignment Plan, as it pertains to newly-acquired and revitalized development.

Currently the Huntsville Housing Authority has what is known as a community-wide waiting list. What that means is this: when an applicant comes in, puts in an application and they are found to be eligible: they meet the income guidelines, they pass the background check and all those sort of things their name is put on a waiting list by bedroom size -- if they need a two-bedroom, three-bedroom, what it is, date and time of application -- and we also have certain preferences points that are applied.

When a unit is available in any of our developments that match the need of the person at the top of that waiting list, they are offered that unit. Now they can refuse the offer twice, but after the second time they're name goes to the bottom of the waiting list. That's a community-wide waiting list. We are proposing to establish separate waiting lists for newly-acquired property and revitalized development. What this will mean is that when someone comes in to apply, they will have a choice: they can say "I will take anything that's available in any development," or they can say, "I am only interested in your newly-acquired development," in this case Mahogany Row and Stone Manor, so that when something comes up, the first unit that comes up, if it's not where they say they're interested in living they won't lose their place on that waiting list.

So it's to give everyone an option to specify that they wish to live in our newly-acquired properties. However, that being said our policy is that for newly-acquired and revitalized development, administrative and incentive transfers take priority over new admissions for waiting lists. Let me explain: for administrative transfers to revitalize developments, these are residents who have previously lived in one of our developments -- for instance in counsel court, and they wish to return, in this case to Gateway Place, when Gateway Place is finished, and they meet the

eligibility requirements for Gateway Place their eligible. They will have first priority to come back to the newly-revitalized development.

Incentive transfers, after the administrative transfers are handled, newly-acquired units will be released to transfers from other public housing developments, giving priority to family self-sufficiency participants who are working and who are in good standing with the Housing Authority. All family self-sufficiency participants who meet the criteria will be made aware of the opportunity to transfer and a transfer list will be established from those participants who express interest.

Only after these two groups have the opportunity to lease at the newly-acquired properties or the revitalized developments do we go to the waiting list. And if there are openings then we will take the person who is top of the waiting list. And in this case, if this is passed, people will be able to designate where they want to move within our developments. Any questions about this?

*Chairman Burruss:* We're not accepting questions at this point. We'll move on to the presentation from Ms. Williams for the Hope VI.

*Carlen Williams:* Good evening everyone. We have second item on the agenda: Hope VI. The second item is the Hope VI addition. And what this is, is an amendment to section 7.0: Hope VI, Mixed Finance Modernization or Development, Demolition and/or Disposition, Conversion of Public Housing, Homeownership Programs and Project-based Vouchers.

The first subcategory of 7.0 is ðHHA may apply for Hope VI or mixed-finance modernization or development at the following developmentsö. In 2009 we included five potential applications that we could submit. This year we have decided we would like to submit an application for Hope VI for the Brookside community and so that needs to be added to this list. So all we're doing is adding Brookside community to letter A of 7.0. That's all that there is on that.

The next item is demolition/disposition. This is also for Brookside. For letter B: we have listed 5 sites and this adds Brookside to that list of sites.

The last item, stimulus budget, part of the significant amendment is additional funds being spent in accordance with the 2009 ARRA stimulus grant that we received. So we have updated the 2009

annual statement, the five-year action plan that was submitted in 2009 and included a stimulus budget that has been given to us. Those are the items.

*Chairman Burruss:* Thank you very much, Ms. Williams. I've got one. At this point we will accept public comments to the amendments to the FY2009-2010 agency plan. Your comments are welcome. Hopefully all of you received a copy of the agenda for today's public hearing and we would ask that you limit your comments to three minutes. We would ask that you not pass your minutes along to anyone else; feel free to make your comments and if you choose not to, you simply give you your slot to speak.

We have several people who are -- multiple persons who have listed their intent to have public comments this evening, but I'm not sure if you have determined which specific action that you wanted to comment to, so I will call out some of the names that are listed here. The first name listed here is Mr. Jerry Burnett, I believe it is. Mr. Burnett, would you like to make comments at this point, or -- okay, that's fine. We will call you later.

Don Stargate?

*Don Stargate:* I would like to reserve my comments for the next meeting.

*Chairman Burruss:* Naomi Johnson?

*Naomi Johnson:* Hi. My comment is simply that I'd like to say where is Caleb? I need everybody in the room to understand what's going on. Caleb is only two years old. Tomorrow if he was diagnosed with needing a bone marrow transplant or something what -- I mean what can his mother do? Section 8 is for that. Section 8 is for when you can't do nothing else and you need some help and a place to stay. It is not something that needs to be pulled. I had nine brain tumors in my head. [Crying]. Both my children -- one went to law school last year, one went to Argentina last year, she had a 4.0 GPA -- excuse me, come close -- 4.0 GPA and she has three majors. But I could not have done that without Section 8, okay? But I want you all to understand what you are fighting against is ridiculous, because Section 8 is simply to help you move on. For ten years -- I dealt with it and am still dealing with it, but it made it possible for me to raise my children. And you all need to understand that tonight. It's not about who lives in the neighborhood, what lives in your neighborhood, tomorrow it could be you -- it could be you. [Applause]. I just wanted to get out because tomorrow -- I mean your insurance company will drop you -- let me let you know they

will drop you. And your savings and 401(k) or whatever it is you have will be gone. It will be gone. You sell your house, you sell whatever you need, and then after that what do you do? You need somebody to pick it up, pick it up. Now mind you that you can't get Medicaid until all that stuff is done. So I'm just letting you know that the reason we're here today -- we need to come together, okay? We need to come together because tomorrow it could be anybody in this room. Anybody. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Thank you Miss Johnson; we appreciate your comments. And again, this -- I would ask that to the extent possible you focus your comments on this annual plan. That is indeed what this public hearing is about; it's about the annual plan and the substantive changes that have been made to this plan. And we would really like to keep comments as much as possible to that subject matter.

Next we have Loretta -- Anita Oliphant. I'm sorry Miss Oliphant, how are you?

*Anita Oliphant:* Hello everybody may God bless you all. I've been praying for every one of you all, for the whole world. I don't know what to say, but I don't know why he called my name for me to be up here, but I'm just gonna say a few words and then I'll be sitting down. I go visit my neighbors and talk about the Bible, try to edify my neighbors and the word of God, helping them and encouraging them and the Bible says: "life and death come from the power of tongue." And may God bless you all. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Jessie Cartwright? Thank you. Tom McAdams.

*Tom McAdams:* Mr. Chairman I'd like to reserve my comments to the second half.

*Chairman Burruss:* Thank you sir. I could go through this entire list -- there are a number of people listed here. If you would like to make your comments at this point in this first proceeding and you have listed "Yes" on the sign-in sheet that you would like to speak, would you please raise your hand and identify yourself? Yes ma'am, your name please?

*Helen Gillespie:* My name is Helen Gillespie.

*Chairman Burruss:* Okay. Miss Gillespie please?

*Helen Gillespie:* Thank you for this opportunity to speak. I am a resident of Drummond Road, down in South Huntsville, where this latest news has taken a ground zero. And I want to share with you a little

bit about what's going on down on Drummond Road and I'm addressing this annual plan as it is the acquisition of properties. Earlier one of the speakers talked about new development and new houses and I believe that's where we fall into.

I purchased a house back in 1997 and have renovated the house. I have doubled the size of the house. It has more than doubled in value. Today if I had to sell my house I would have to sell it for \$330,000.00. And generally houses in HUD-inspired areas do not go for \$330,000.00. So there's the fear factor there -- some economic fear factor. Part of that is once one house takes root others will follow.

I fear the perception of Fleming Meadows becoming a HUD-inspired area. So what I'm asking the Huntsville Housing Authority, the leaders of our community are asking for guarantees: can you guarantee that there will not be an influx of houses, say more than two in a five-mile area? Wow. Maybe three in a five-mile area? I just don't want the whole neighborhood to become a HUD-inspired area.

Now talking about reaching out for opportunity. I come from a background -- I was raised in Miami, Florida and I came from a background where my father was a construction laborer. Yes, I have humble beginnings. My social opportunity was joining the Army in 1971, before it was typical for a woman to join the Army. So yes, reaching out for opportunity is part of my fiber.

If we don't do this right, it's going to be unfair to the resident of that house, too. People walking by, pointing out: "That's the HUD home; that's where the HUD people live; that's where the Section 8 people live." That is not right. Don't be unfair to the people that would move into that area.

Now if it does go Section 8 or HUD-inspires or -- I don't know what the terms are, I personally will go down there and welcome the people. I will do what I can to be a good neighbor. But what I fear is the neighborhood becoming what's known as a HUD area or whatever. See I've got quite a bit of money invested in that area; I've got emotion invested in that area. I want to be a good citizen. And I think I speak for a lot of my neighbors also.

So if property acquisition is a part of your new plan, please consider both sides of the story: the residents that are already there and the residents that might be living there. Thank you again for this time.

*Chairman Burruss:* Thank you Miss Gillespie for your comments. We appreciate it. [Applause]. And I would ask that you please be respectful of all of our presenters, of everyone that wants to make comments. I would ask that you not make outside comments during the course of someone's presentation, please. Let's be Christ-like and be respectful. Are there others on the list that would like to speak at this point? Yes sir, what is your name?

*Kareem Yancey:* Kareem Yancey.

*Chairman Burruss:* You did sign up to--

*Kareem Yancey:* Yes.

*Chairman Burruss:* And your name once --

*Kareem Yancey:* Kareem Yancey.

*Chairman Burruss:* Thank you.

*Kareem Yancey:* Hello. Yes, my name is Kareem Yancey, I just recently moved back to public housing, you know, for situations that I couldn't predict, but for one reason I changed jobs, trying to get a better life for me and my kids -- all five of them. Yes it is five of them and I'll take care of all of them. These are not hands that look like they looking for a free ride, okay? Tell it like it is: it is not HUD homes -- she don't want it to be a ghetto, or what they describe as a ghetto, okay?

When I first came down to Huntsville I started out working in hotels. Now I'm supervisor in a local complex. But I've worked to get there. I work every day and I still am a full-time student. I work every day, every night.

I spoke to Mo Brooks this morning. You all know Mr. Moe Grips. This one on the radio, he told me flat out my kids don't deserve to go to school on the south side. He said my kids do not deserve to go to school. He said we had to earn it. I'm like, "All right, so what is it that we have to do in order to earn it?" We get up every morning; I drive my kids up to school and go pick them up. I do everything that's required as an American citizen to have whatever it is and to live wherever I want to live in this country. So why is it so hard -- its HUD houses? So what? So what are the people to do? Housing Authority standards-- I work in so many complexes and the standards in some of them complexes that's on the south

side can't touch Housing Authority. [Applauses]. They cannot touch it. Section 8 housing or the other -- they cannot touch it.

So when you say stuff like, "Oh you got to earn your way and you got to do that," I'm standing right here: "So where's mine?" You know what I'm saying? My kids deserve a chance like everybody else. They want to go to Whitesburg, they shouldn't have to be stuck in Lincoln or in schools that don't do as well because they don't get the same amount of funding that the other schools do in these neighborhoods, because the homes don't cost \$100,000.00 or \$330,000.00, because they don't cost that now my kids don't have a chance? I'm getting to tell Mr. Mo Brooks and anybody else that tries to stop me from coming over there is that we will not wait -- we are almost there. We will be there and you cannot stop me -- we will have the American Dream. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Are there other persons? Yes ma'am. Your name?

*Tracie Taylor:* Tracie Taylor.

*Chairman Burruss:* Okay. Miss Taylor, please come forward.

*Tracie Taylor:* I would like to ask what all the stimulus money is going to be used for.

*Chairman Burruss:* Ma'am, this is not a question and answer session, this is a public hearing, so we'll gladly accept your comments if you have specific questions that you would like to address. A question such as that may be much better-suited for our next scheduled regularly-scheduled board meeting, but we will be glad to -- if you would address your question in writing to the Housing Authority we'd be glad to get you a response. Thank you so much.

Yes ma'am? You're name is?

*Rosa Toussaint Ortiz:* Rosa Toussaint Ortiz.

*Chairman Burruss:* Okay. Rosa, please.

*Rosa Toussaint Ortiz:* Good evening. And the reason I am getting ready to talk is because it sounds to me like most of the people are here for the sake of mean. And, to let you know, my name is Rosa Maria Toussaint Ortiz and Huntsville has been my city since 1985, I am 50 years old, I am a U.S. Army veteran, I'm a social worker and an advocate for those in need. But most important I am a daughter of God and a citizen of heaven.

I am here today to bring hope to my brothers and sisters that are living in low income housing. I am here to support you.

It takes pain to understand pain. In 1987 I found myself in a very difficult situation. I was going through a divorce, my son was one year old and I was pregnant with my daughter. I was working at a hospital and my work schedule was changed from full-time to part-time. I applied for low income housing and I qualified right away.

I became a resident of Searcy Homes, what the people call "the project" across from the Greyhound bus station. I only have good memories about my neighbors. My daughter was born there. Few months later I was offered a job as a social worker and I moved to North Philadelphia. Few months later I fall in love with a beautiful over there in Philadelphia, and because I'm a veteran I was able to buy that home for one dollar.

But guess what? A few days later I came home from work and there was trash and dead fish in front of my door. I could not understand what's going on. Then one night I was at home writing checks to pay my bills and I heard when someone broke my front windows. I was confused. I called the police and a co-worker. And that day I learned something that I was not aware of: I had broken an unwritten rule. I have moved in one of those white people neighborhoods where black people were not welcome. The media got involved and the white neighbors gave all kind of excuses. They said: "She should have not have got involved, and she should not have moved in this neighborhood." They gave excuse like, "She's gonna mess up the neighborhood. They gonna bring drugs."

I could not understand. It was just me and my children. I was working, involved in child care and church, but I was accused I was going to bring drugs to the neighborhood.

Our lives, me and my children, we were in danger. And we end up homeless. And let me tell you what happened: today October the 29<sup>th</sup> I am very very confused, but not as much as I was before. It was very interesting because when I moved back to Huntsville the media from Philadelphia got in touch with me and they asked me about Huntsville. And you know what I said? I say a lot of nice things about Huntsville. And said, "You know, we get along so well. Better than Philadelphia.

But today I don't feel that way. I am not confused. The Housing Authority made a big mistake -- they forgot about the unwritten rule: you stay on your side of town and we will be happy. My white friends, my black friends and me, we all agree that the rules about white neighborhoods and black neighborhoods are not acceptable in Huntsville.

We understand that some of the people in South Huntsville have fears, but we also know that fear does not come from God. Yes, I have to mention God because the majority of those against this plan also call themselves Christians.

Some of you are afraid that the value of your homes will depreciate if the people from the projects move to the south. Where is your faith? Don't you know that fear is the opposite of faith? Have you forgot that perfect love cast all fear away? Have you forgot that God is love and he said, "Love your neighbors as yourself"? Don't you understand that God has not given us a spirit of fear but a spirit of power, love and a sound mind?

My advice to the people from the South Huntsville is this: when the low income housing family move into neighborhood have the welcome committee ready to assist this family, go to their homes, welcome them with apple pies and offer your resources to these families, go to their community centers and provide tutoring services for their children, create a support group for single mothers. With love and kindness you will empower these families and God will bless the city.

*Chairman Burruss:* Thank you.

*Rosa Toussaint Ortiz:* Today I ask -- and thank you very much. Keep the hope alive. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Yes. Are there others who would like to speak to this presentation? Yes ma'am? Come right on up to the mike.

*Jackie Reed:* Good evening. Thank you for allowing me to come in and speak. This place is just not big enough for a meeting; we need to open some big doors somewhere in the city. Tonight it's not about black and white; it's about what the rich is doing to the poor and the middle class people. We're all a paycheck away from being homeless and being in HUD housing. I do not like the word HUD, I don't like the word Huntsville Housing Authority, and I don't like what you're doing. If government has got so much money, be it this city, be it Montgomery, be it Washington -- when I see Searcy

Homes torn down down there, perfectly good housing, the city paid \$2.8 million for them. They want the rich boys that's gonna build them to pay.

I hate to say this but the black people have been moved around too many years too long. I do not understand why you don't take a stand and stop some of what's going on. Maybe the white folks don't want you down in their southeast; if they didn't want me down there I wouldn't want to go down there. I mean think about it. You stand back and go to school boards and you have sit back and allowed the center of the city schools to close because we think we want our children to go to the better and bigger schools. Why have we not demanded these center schools to be equal to the other schools?

I do not see -- [applause] ó James Dawson will never be gone as far as I'm concerned. He stood on that school board and he stood for something, and I believe -- and that's a good thing when you stand you got to stand for something. Whether people like it or not -- that's not important. You got to stand up and stand for something. But Councill Courts coming down. The big money boys have had their eye on that property for many many years. So HUD housing is seeing a -- somebody's behind all this talk. Now be it -- I've been watching these folks a long time -- I used to go -- I went to their first meeting that they had when I heard Councill Courts was coming down. All of Huntsville Hospital wants this hospital. No, Huntsville Hospital has never wanted this property. I called the CEO -- they never had their eyes on this property. It's the mayor (that used to be mayor I don't know about this mayor I ain't got involved in him yet). Anyway, this started in city hall; we want you out of downtown, we don't want you downtown, we want you moved right out of this city.

Now many of you may not have never been to Memphis, but my son goes over there quite often in his job. There's more crime in Memphis inner city than anywhere in this country because of what's going on with this Huntsville Housing Authority here. You all -- none of you, black or white, don't want to be a party to that. When you move, you don't have the bus system to get to your jobs, you're not near the hospitals, you're not near downtown, and you're away from everything. How can crime not keep continuing to go on? How you gonna get to your schools? How you gonna get children to school? I don't want my grandchildren riding up and down these highways on these buses which are very very dangerous. Riding a school bus used to be to a better school. And when I hear that they're buying foreclosed homes, why is the

government not helping those people losing those homes help to save those homes? [Applause]. Why in the world do big government officials have loose screws in their head, 'cause I can't never get elected, maybe they think I got something. But it's just being kind: the black and the white and whatever, all of us get to take a stand. If you put southeast bunch and the northeast bunch -- live right over here off the hill close to Butler Terrace and they're talking about closing Butler Terrace down and I'm gonna raise the roof as soon as they do. I can ask for Dr. Ann Moore's resignation and every one of them sitting up there. Now that makes schools continue to close, and let these developers tell these big boy systems and tell you all what to do? Who cares about downtown? Let these young professionals go find something to do like we did. It's not about downtown, but that's where our money's going: they're going to build a riverwalk. I really have a hard time seeing it come down. And that really upset me. And Council Court, they could have painted those, put shrubs out there, put new carpet in 'em, opened them up, and had mixed use. You want to mix us up and use us, then that's what to do.

*Chairman Burruss:* Miss Reed?

*Jackie Reed:* Stop letting the big boys' system you around in the city.

*Chairman Burruss:* Thank you very much Miss Reed.

*Jackie Reed:* Thank you all. I'll be back if you get your meetings on the right time when we can come back. Thank you. [Applause].

*Rev. Al Garrett:* Reverend Al Garrett.

*Chairman Burruss:* Al Garrett. Thank you sir.

*Rev. Al Garrett:* By all accounts, by all appearances, the Fleming Meadows Association, the South Huntsville Civic Association, along with some of our elected officials and many Huntsville realtors have chosen to select who is worthy, deserving of dwelling or having home ownership in South Huntsville. This uncivic-like movement has chosen to deny families, United States American citizens the American dream they themselves now enjoy.

I have questions for those who live in South Huntsville: where were you? When North Huntsville cried out for our equality in economic development, where were you? When North Huntsville, especially from a school board member, Dr. James Dawson, cried out for equality in education, where were you? When the plight of

the poor in Huntsville was not at your doorstep, you did nothing. You were nowhere to be found.

South Huntsville, what is love? According to 1 John 4: "this is how we know what love is: Jesus laid down his life for us. So we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If a man has material wealth, material possession and he feeds his brother in need and he shows no pity and fails to help him, then the love of God is not in him. I refuse to believe Huntsville is loveless. A city without compassion for those in greatest need. I refuse to believe the City of Huntsville, the city that wants to return to the moon can't find a way to live together on Earth.

So I am here, I am here to challenge every Huntsvillian that recognizes the value of each person living anywhere in this city to stand up as well as stand against any movement that would deny one of our citizens the right, the opportunity of fulfilling this American dream. Finally, by all accounts, by all appearances this Huntsville Housing Authority and its commissioners are working toward helping, training and supporting families as they move towards the American dream of home ownership. The American dream of a better life for their children and themselves. Not only is what you do know, not only is what you do moral, it is your job. It is the job of the Housing Authority to lift families up so they move families out.

So to Mayor Battle, to Mike Lundy, and to the commissioners and the entire Housing Authority, you have my support for your effort to make a difference in the lives of those you serve for the benefit of all of Huntsville.

*Chairman Burruss:* Are there others that wish to speak at this time? Yes sir? What's your name?

*Jessy Cartwright:* Jessy Cartwright. Hello everybody.

*Audience:* Hello.

*Jessy Cartwright:* I am in middle school; I am a resident of public housing. And I'm here to say -- here all you guys talking about moving in on these, the foreclosed homes. And to the people who are obligating us, what gives you the morally right tell me where I can and cannot live? You do not know me; you've never talked to me. My grandmother used to talk to me, and I've read about it in school about the civil rights movement, sit-ins and bus boycotts. I never

thought I would see the day where such racism would happen in my lifetime again. [Applause].

And I noticed that the lady who spoke earlier, Section 8 homes and they bring down the housing and hey, that's the HUD house. No -- when you're driving down the street do you notice Section 8 houses? They don't look no different. And you all say they're going to bring down the price value. So what? We're still people, we're God's people -- we're all here on this Earth.

And downtown is the perfect place for housing. I don't know why the mayor's moving them out. It gives everybody a place where they can walk through; get that stuff that we need to get done. Couple of years ago my mom was living with my aunt -- we was all living in housing right out here in Mason Court. Our aunt decided she didn't want us living with her no more. We put in for housing for couple months now. They kicked out, my mama's ready to call DHR, take the kids that was living in the van for that night. We still had the key to the mailbox, we opened the mailbox the next day there was a HUD letter: come and get your house at Council Court. Council Court said they'll take care of our family. [Applause].

Huntsville Housing saved my family, they saved my brothers. And if you guys don't want to save each other -- it could happen to you all tomorrow; you all could go bankrupt, somebody could rob your house, you all ain't got nothing left. If you all don't want HUD, then HUD don't want you all. [Applause]. That's all I got to say.

*Chairman Burruss:* Are there other comments? Yes sir, your name, sir?

*Norburt Nutz:* My name is Norburt Nutz, can you hear me in the back? We've heard some very interesting discussion from a lot of people. We have the black and white, we have the north and the south, and I'm not in either one of those sides. My question is -- and you're not gonna answer it so I'll submit it in writing later on: why are you spending money that you don't need to spend? Why are you not providing those people who need public housing housing at least possible cost?

I pay my taxes; I pay a lot of taxes, unfortunately. I've lived a long time and I've managed to be comfortable. But the point is, if you don't have to spend the money to support all these people, you can support more people with the same amount of money. So I don't understand why you try to go buy expensive houses anyplace, as

opposed to reasonable or minimum cost. That's my point.  
[Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Are there others who have signed up who are on the list that you speak at this time? Your name please?

*Audrene Goodlett:* Audrene Goodlett.

*Chairman Burruss:* You have signed up on the list?

*Audrene Goodlett:* I believe so.

*Chairman Burruss:* The last name is Goodlett? Please -- thank you.

*Audrene Goodlett:* Can you hear me? Okay, how you all doing? I'm really nervous about this plan to speak when I came, but especially after hearing -- I'm sorry I forgot your name, but that's really touching. I didn't grow up here in the South, I grew up up North in New York, and so I really got a culture shock when I came here. And it being 2009 I just -- I was really in a culture shock because I was just so surprised to see and hear some history still going on that I kind of heard on TV when I was growing up and I don't know, maybe I was kind of too sheltered from it.

But -- and my children, they don't even see color. I guess I just don't know what to say. I was in shock just sitting here listening. I'm still in shock. But if you get a knife and you cut me and you cut her we're gonna bleed the same color -- this isn't about that -- this flesh is an illusion-- I mean the other lady spoke, she probably right. It's not about color anymore it's about class now.

And I'm a resident of public housing I went back to school to get my degree, my children are on the honor roll since I've been in public housing. As a matter of fact my daughter is gifted and she's -- she should be in college I feel. I have two children in college -- they left public housing and went on to college right now. And one, which you'll probably see in Publix, where you all shop every day as a manager. She started and became a manager three years. And I'm not bragging, but it's time to stop stereotyping. It's just really time to stop this.

I watch the news a lot and you don't really have to be afraid of drugs coming from the residents from public housing because there's more drugs on South Parkway [applause] I'm not trying to downgrade or put anybody down, but you hear about the meth labs

every day. And I was wondering if I was down there would I be moving next door to somebody that has a meth lab, you know?

So, all right and everything's gonna be all right. We want -- as a matter of fact I don't -- you know you talk about improving public housing, I want to live in a nice place too -- I like nice things too. And I know how to take care of things and we all -- we humans too. I'm not sure what all the hoopla's all about but nobody can stop God's plan, really [applause]. That's what it's gonna be, but -- okay.

*Chairman Burruss:* Thank you very much. [Applause]. Are there others who have requested to speak who like to make your comments at this public hearing? Yes ma'am? Your name please? Tamara Pryor? Okay.

*Tamara Pryor:* I know I am probably supposed to wait 'til the next one, but I want to tell you how I feel. Can you hear me now? Well I am one of the residents that lives on Mahogany Row where the drug bust occurred, what, two weeks or a week between each other, and neither one of the residents were part the Housing Authority. So let's not point the fingers here, like it's all about the Housing Authority bringing down property value.

My daughter whom is a student at Mountain Gap Middle School who was a student at Mountain Gap Middle School before I moved down here is a straight A student. She will not bring down your SAT scores. She is on the academic team; she made the basketball team, so we did not come down here to bring down your stats in no shape form or fashion. If anything, we helped it. [Applause].

And I don't know about you all but I just really feel like it's more racial than anything. I've been to two meetings, PTA meetings at Mountain Gap Middle School, and if you could have heard the president of PTA crying about the money that their schools are not getting because of the quote-unquote north side schools getting all the money, but I write a check every week to Mountain Gap for something. Every week -- I don't miss a beat, when you ask for the money they get it. So don't look at me like we're not able to afford to be on your side of town.

And if you ride down Mahogany Road, Housing Authority building's the best one on there. So they all have been kept up, they done redid the whole neighborhood where we live anyway. But you want to complain about us being down there when you got seven meth labs. I live directly across, diagonally across from where these drugs busts occurred, but you want to talk about us.

Give us a chance -- I'm not dumb, I'm not stupid, I'm not looking for a handout. I've been because I have three degrees; I don't need your help. [Applause]. And thank you Housing Authority for your help. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Yes sir, your name? Aladdin Bushir.

*Aladdin Bushir:* Good evening, ladies and gentleman. As I'm involved with so many organizations I'm speaking to you on my own behalf. I present only myself. I'm a married man I can't buy my lunch without permission. The target for me being here, if I hear the grand objective is neighborhood stabilization, excuse me -- South Huntsville is stable enough. The average salary in the area we live is \$80,000.00. I would rather -- and it's not racial thing. It has nothing to do about race for me -- God is my witness.

If we really wanted to stabilize neighborhood where the foreclosure is, I'll pay for your gas -- I'll give you a list of Huntsville. The tale of two cities needs to stop and needs to stop now. People use the race -- the public needs to stop. Don't let us use poverty for politics or for room filled with smoke where people make deals that these men are not here for us. I'm speaking from the HUD. One of the houses has crack in the foundation. The HUD are gonna pay \$80,000.00 market value, fix the foundation for \$150,000.00 and sell it for a market value of \$80,000.00. I'm not a mathematician but for me that's waste of your and my monies. Money is green, we all are human beings, let's use it right. Thank you. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Yes ma'am? Share your name with is please?

*Mattie Hopkins:* Hopkins, Mattie.

*Chairman Burruss:* Thank you.

*Mattie Hopkins:* I'm here to let everyone know, because you all Section 8 are in the Housing Authority park there's no problem being in those type of places because God -- God, you can't judge anybody. Only person that can judge you is God. So you all people need to stop trying to judge us because you don't know what we're like until you see what we are like. So you need to put your head up in the air and let Lord take care of it for you all.

*Chairman Burruss:* Any comments at this point?

*Queen Udoneig:* I would like to say something.

*Chairman Burruss:* Your name?

*Queen Udoneig:* Queen Udoneig. I would like to say I'm from Brookside -- just added us on to this, but we been having a lot of meetings this week -- this is my third one. And see when you have a meeting for this, you think you just need to sit in the house, you got to come out and see what's going on, because if you don't come to the meetings and know what's going on with the planning, you ain't gonna know what's going on, what you're gonna do. As far as moving down southeast, moving northwest -- I don't know where they's gonna move us but I'm gonna try to stay in the HH system because that's what I have to do.

But I think by them moving us -- I don't know about that, but if it's gonna make better change, here we go. So you know I'm just gonna say this is a good turnout -- this is the biggest meeting I went to besides Civic Center. I do go to those. But anyway, thank you. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Yes ma'am, your name please?

*Pat Glass:* Pat Glass. I live close to Helen -- probably seen as one of those, you know, white deep pockets. Anyhow, none of you know whether I have black sons or daughters and I'm not gonna tell you. It's not a race issue. The issue that we're dealing with here as I see it is -- I emailed Sandra Moon, the councilwoman as to what she thought about some of the purchases and so forth, and she emailed me back saying that the Huntsville Housing Authority is a federal agency with no involvement whatsoever to city, state and local governments.

So I find it a little disturbing. For instance, do any of us, black or white, have a say? How do we have a say when we're dealing with an elected, should I say, officials? This is the issue: I feel the total issue is do we have a say or do we not? Thank you. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Are you -- you have signed up? Please come forward. Your name please?

*Vanitta Singh:* Vanitta Singh. Thank you. I live in southeast Huntsville and I welcome the people from HUDs who are going to move in there. I hope HUD does what it is supposed to do, and I hope the people will move in there and I will welcome anyone who moved into my neighborhood. I have nothing -- I stand up [applause] -- as the gentleman said I stand up for it and I stand against anything that

has to do with race or class which is an issue over here. I'm sad to say even though there is a denial that race and class matter, it matters only -- and perhaps it is the only thing that matters. I wish to say that we have to stop this apartheid in southeast Huntsville. [Applause] -- We live together; this suburban elitism will not work in the future. It has not worked so far and I wish to say also that when people from housing projects were moved into middle class neighborhoods or aspiring middle class neighborhoods I don't know why the southeast council people are thinking that they belong to some upper class elite enclave. We are all working class people, we have all worked hard, and people who work hard should be able to live where they want to live, to be able to send their children to school where they want to send them to school, and every school and every neighborhood should be open to all of us as citizens of the United States. [Applause].

I wish to say that in the past when people from projects have been moved into our neighborhoods so that this injustice is removed as in the Robert Taylor homes in Chicago, in the Yonkers projects in New York, in Baltimore, in the Goodrow projects of the Cabrini Green in Chicago it has always worked. Always. [Applause]. Those who don't know please go and read the research on this matter and see that it has worked.

Now for those who say that there is no racism and there is no class involved, please let's remember that the desirable qualities in neighborhoods are valued by all of us. Cleanliness, orderliness, safety, good schools, high property values, they are always valued by all of us. It's not as if some people value them and some others don't. But the seemingly race neutral qualities are subconsciously inseparable from race and class in our community. And in many cases, in the minds of many white people, race is often used as a proxy for the neighborhood traits. And this has to stop. It's not as if people who are in the projects don't like safety and orderliness and cleanliness. [Applause].

I wish to say also that it is possible to have racism without racists, yeah? It is possible. People in southeast Huntsville -- no one is racist. But there is racism. Why? Because there is interpersonal racism which is not there. Yeah, the interaction between whites and blacks can be seemingly very pleasant and all that good stuff. Okay? Then there is institutional racism against which there are laws. Yes, there are laws against injustice in hospitals and in universities and school and so on against intentional racism.

And finally there is what I will call structural racism, which crosses all kinds of public domains, and which is impossible to touch and to really name and to define. And that is what the problem is. So then in spite of all the diversity rackets that we have and the -- which badgers us into all kinds of sensitivity training, all of that works on the individual level. But it has not touched structural racism, and it is the duty of the Huntsville Housing Authority to do its little part so that Huntsville becomes a community like Seattle or like Tucson or like Baltimore is now, where the racist things have women in it. Thank you ladies and gentlemen. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Yes ma'am?

*Robin Arnold:* My name is Robin Arnold.

*Chairman Burruss:* Once again I would ask that you please be respectful of each and everyone that wishes to make comments this evening. Thank you very much.

*Robin Arnold:* Good evening. My name is Robin Arnold and like many of you in here I was also -- I was married to an engineer, found myself going through a divorce and ended up in situations like a lot of people have described this evening. My child, my children, four of them who were born here in Huntsville, Alabama were raised in the city of Huntsville, Alabama. They went to Highlands, they went to Ed White, they went to Mountain Gap, they went to Whitesburg and they went to Grissom. And my child, that went from Highlands to Ed White to Grissom graduated with honors from Grissom. She did not lower any score whatsoever. And then when she graduated with honors she went on a Gates scholarship on to University of Michigan. She is now a U.S. marshal working for the President of the United States. [Applause] I sat at Grissom High School, where parents cried because they didn't have the money to pay for the band fees. This is a Huntsville problem -- this is not a black problem, this is not a white problem, this is not a class problem, this is a people problem.

Sometimes we find ourselves living in cars; sometimes we find our house value going down. I had a house in North Huntsville that was \$300,000.00 and I was evicted from it after I was divorced. So the equity didn't matter at that point when I was living in my car. This is a please for us to reach out and help each other. There are homes that homeless people can live in. Open up the doors. We have the key. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Yes sir? Your name please?

*Jerry Burnett:* Jerry Burnett. Good evening everybody, my name's Jerry Burnett and I'm not living in public housing but I do represent fair housing laws. And what I see in the past six months has been a number of potential violations of fair housing laws. When I see people in opposition, like people living in South Huntsville who appears to have no regard for the law as it is written.

The law says that anybody living in America has a right to live wherever they choose without any interference. They have that right. And of all people Mr. Mo Brooks know that -- he's an attorney. And all along he's been misleading the people in South Huntsville. And as a chairperson for the NAACP, for the housing rights of Alabama I've seen enough of it. They have the right to live there if they choose to. Thank you. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* You are on the list and you have requested to speak? Your name please. Jean Scott? Thank you Miss Scott.

*Jean Scott:* I'm from southeast Huntsville and I welcome diversity. I would like to see people move into my neighborhood. I do not have a problem with it. I would like to see people move into southeast Huntsville -- all kinds of people. I don't care who they are. I want to give everybody a chance. Everybody in this country deserves a chance.

And I'll tell you, one of the things that really bothers me right now is when I read the *Huntsville Times*, every day you see forecloses in that newspaper -- people losing their houses. They're gonna end up in low income houses because there's gonna be no place else for them to go. These are people, these are children. We have to worry about these kids. I mean if we have any decency at all in us we have to feel good, and help these children. They need a place, they need a house. They shouldn't be in a shelter, they need security. All our kids need security and they need a good education, and they should get it from every school in this city. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Donna Summers?

*Donna Summers:* Donna Summers, vice president of Searcy. I came to Chicago from one of the outside areas. I had a good life, but I moved to Huntsville. My father got killed, I've got eight kids, [crying], the Housing Authority took me in and they don't just take you in, they scan you, they check your background, they check your police

records, they check everything, and if you've got anything on you they will not let you in. And we are not trailer trash.

My eight kids and my six grandkids, they deserve to live wherever they need to live. [Applause]. They have a right to the clothes, the cars, the houses, love -- and these -- you know, give us a try, we ain't nobody -- we are somebody, and look at us like that. We need a hand up, not a handout. Thank you. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Yes, your name please?

*Eddgra Fallin:* Eddgra Fallin. Good evening. I'm sitting here like I'm in *The Twilight Zone*. I'm wondering if I am in Huntsville, Alabama, I'm wondering if this is 2009, because I guess as a lifelong resident we have to have a little history here about Huntsville, but first I want to say to all the residents of public housing you have nothing to be defensive about, you don't have to pled with anybody, and you don't have to explain your circumstances to anybody.

*Audience:* Amen. Tell 'em girl.

*Eddgra Fallin:* And for the residents of South Huntsville: you do not own South Huntsville. [Applause]. It is not yours -- anybody and everybody that can -- that wants to live there can live there. To Mr. Mo Brooks black people are just as smart as white people. [Applause]. And as an elected official and a former district attorney, your attitude regarding this whole issue is just frightening and chilling and telling. You can sit here all day and say that it's not about racism, but it is.

If you look around and you see it -- most of the people coming to this podium begging and pleading with you to let them live in your neighborhood -- it's not your neighborhood, it's everybody that pays taxes -- it's every citizens.

Now the history of Huntsville is this: Huntsville, the center city that Ms. Reed talked about used to be all black, but blacks were moved from downtown Councill Court. I am a resident of Councill Courts. My father and mother lived there -- my brother was born there marched him from Huntsville High School and right down there to Pelham Street. But that was because that was the only place black people could live within the housing projects.

And so they lived and we moved to North Huntsville and at that time North Huntsville was pretty integrated -- it was a great place to live. Then all of a sudden the white people started moving down

to South Huntsville and trying to claim it as a little oasis or whatever you want to call it. And then North Huntsville was left with failing schools and lower property values and crime is attached to poverty. Now if crime increases and South Huntsville, because public housing people move there, then we need a new police chief. It's not gonna be the people's problem because crime is -- they're not gonna be bringing the crime -- they don't want -- they're not criminals, they're people. People.

Now I don't know why we are having a hearing to determine if people can move to a certain part of the city. I'm really trying to figure that out. But we need to stop this people. And we need to come together. We are all in this boat together. If you're end of the boat is nice and shiny and clean and my end of the boat has hole in it, guess what? The whole darn boat is going down. And we are all in this boat together, we all should live together and we should all love together. And I don't know why you all think, people that live in South Huntsville, I don't know why you all think that you all own that part of town, but the only other place that you all can go further south is on across the river over there in the hay ranch. [Applause].

*Rev. Jerry Crutcher:* Thank you for giving me a moment just to address you tonight. Leonard Fuller, some years ago, started Habitat for Humanity. Some of you know about that. But it's that all of God's children need a decent place to live. This young man here that spoke, the Boy Scout a few minutes ago and this little fellow right here on the front seat, and all the rest: we need to leave a better place for them. Talk about racism -- I'm the social action committee chair for GHI and F -- when I reached the paper and find certain words like "If this keeps going on we'll be like," you know. But we moved down here because we are different, and we want to be different. That says something. It goes deeper than the surface. But to me it went right back to racism. And we above that, aren't we? We should be.

And the ladies that came up and said let 'em come -- and we'll do our best to make them welcome. Housing Authority we applaud your efforts -- thank you for doing what you're doing. And I want to charge the ministers in the house tonight to the clergy -- let's get together, all right, and talk about this whole issue because we need racial harmony and not pain. All of God's children needs a decent place to live. Together we can work this thing.

I been proud of Huntsville, I've been going on missions to help bring folk into here. St. Louis, other places with the chamber and

others. And I spoke to them about how great Huntsville is, yet we have this ugly head raising up -- that's something that we don't need if we want to be the community that we want to be. God bless you -- keep up the good work. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Are there others who have signed up that care to speak at this point? Your name please?

*Christi Parker:* Christi Parker. I live in Flemming Meadows; I've had a house there for almost ten years now. And I've heard a lot of stories from both sides and I can totally relate to both sides. And I don't care what your race is; we all have struggled with our situations. I'm also divorced, struggled, my husband was an engineer, he made more than twice what I did, it was devastating, he was physically abusive, and I had to get out, run away, so I left. Got an apartment and paid my money to graduate school in order to make a higher income, save for a house -- excuse me? Thank you -- had to cash out a portion of my 401(k) that I had saved for ten years, in order to buy this house on my own.

I don't have kids -- I heard some of the people talking about that they have X number of kids and getting kind of emotional and that is sensitive. I don't have kids but it's because I can't have kids. And this hurts me just as much. I wish I had a family -- I don't; it's just me. All I have is that piece of property in Flemming Meadows. And to think that we're concerned about someone of a different race -- and there are a lot of black people living in our neighborhood, there are Asians that live in our neighborhood, there are white people that are higher class, and there are white people that are lower class. We have crime in there and yes, whoever talked about the crystal meth lab, that's like two houses behind me that that happened. And the kid that had that used to live across the street from me and an old man was banging on my door at 6:00 in the morning and he had been tied up with duct tape, kidnapped, came to my door, banging on my door, wanting help trying to get into my house. Called the police, you know.

It is a good neighborhood but crap like that happens. So there's that, crystal meth, and there have been other incidents. The other house behind me was a little old man who lived there, a recluse. He had no running water; had no electricity, but he minded his own business. Does anybody know who this is? Jack? Or was? He -- one of the local churches came in to save him, and I'm a religious person, they went to save him, gutted his house and moved homeless people into his home. Do you know what happened? Drugs started going on over there, drinking, clear down

the house -- and my backyard -- I could see his backyard, 'cause all we have is a chainlink fence. If I could afford a great big windfence to block myself off I'd do it, but I don't have the money.

The homeless people started living there, and these are men, primarily, drinking beer, smoking pot, smoking cigarettes, calling catcalls to the women in the neighborhood that live close to me -- getting drunk, banging on my next door neighbors windows, trying to break into her house, coming around asking for money, intimidating people into giving them money and it's been one stressful thing after another.

So don't think because we're in South Huntsville but we don't have stupid issues like that because we do. And I'm tired of it. But I think -- you know, everybody deserves a little piece to call their own, so I don't appreciate the respects saying that we own southeast Huntsville because I do own my little HUD house. There have been times that I have been on disability, I've been hospitalized with pneumonia, I had a mild stroke and I could not function for about six months, I was unemployed, and I struggled. I struggled so hard to get back on my feet. And I've used every bit of my savings and I'm trying to get back there now.

So I don't want anybody to think that just because a person's white or lives in that part of town that they have it easy 'cause I struggle every day, paycheck to paycheck. It seems unfair for the city to want to buy property in my neighborhood that I've worked so hard to buy on my own to just sell it at a low, low price for somebody else.

So when I'm struggling are they gonna buy my home from me and rent it back to me so I can live there and catch up financially? I seriously doubt it. So that's my say. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Did you sign in and express a desire to speak?

*Renee Vanderbilt:* No, I didn't sign in 'cause I had to wait.

*Chairman Burruss:* Okay, please. Your name?

*Renee Vanderbilt:* My name is Renee Vanderbilt and I live on Temperance Street. I just wanted to speak to the gentleman who spoke about Mr. Fuller ó that started Habitat for Humanity. The analogy being used for this particular issue is not correct because Habitat for Humanity is those who have chosen to work -- that's what provides decent housing for people, and I am all for that. And I support that. But

Habitat for Humanity works in such a way that when you are chosen to get one of the houses you must of course put in a number of sweat equity hours, and it's quite a few. And then they are given a very -- either a low or no-cost loan. And then they pay off their mortgage, so they don't have the same interest rate that I would have to pay or a private citizen would have to pay, but they are private citizens, they pay it back to Habitat for Humanity.

And so the analogy that he used is a little different. In that situation it's really a place where someone is actually paying off what it took to put that house up. Of course things are donated and time is donated, but it is paid off by the individual or the couple, the family that is chosen to be in that house. So that analogy was somewhat flawed.

And as a resident of the older part of English Village, and I've been here about 15 years, originally from Indiana, my issue is really a governmental one and a mindset towards the government that a board that is appointed and not elected and not accountable to the people is my major problem is that we cannot have any say and it comes down from Washington, DC, and it is must an issues that our country is dealing with now is the government our provider or do we work and provide for ourselves and dependent on the lord?

So I just wanted to speak out that the analogy about Habitat for Humanity was not a correct one in this. My understanding from what I've read is that those who are put in the housing set, the HHA purchases are in a special program toward self-sufficiency, but it's not self-sufficiency to have the very very small amount of örentö put into a savings account so that someday you'll have somebody to get into your own apartment that you negotiate yourself, rather than the Housing Authority, or into your own home that you rent or purchase, rather than the Housing Authority putting you in there. And that is an issue that I have. Habitat for Humanity, great. They are chosen, they are screened and they pay it themselves by sweat equity and money. But putting money aside for someone who is not really paying rent and -- so my issue in this with -- my belief in a capitalist system, starting out very small and working your way up. And I come from a working class family. My dad wore Redwing work boots and Sears work clothes, and I was first in my family to go to college and it was a state college and I didn't have pearls. And I still didn't have pearls. So we have to put our money away. That was my issue -- my issue is a governmental one and the issue is governmental and authority and you don't really report to the people of Huntsville. I'm not sure who you report to because your appointed and you do not -- you

haven't been elected by us and that is my bigger problem. So those are my two points: the wrong analogy with Habitat for Humanity and the governmental appointed, not elected. Thank you. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Yes?

*Rev. K. H. Joffrion:* Thank you Mr. Chairman, my name is Reverend Kerry Holder Joffrion; I'm a resident of South Huntsville, Southeast Huntsville. And I live with the Fullers and Habitat for Humanity, I'm a Southerner and I cannot imagine the late Mr. Fuller who would want to say anything but applause for Huntsville Housing Authority. I come from a long line of white Southerners who have worked in the Civil Rights Movement generationally, and I'm very proud to be in a city that attempts to build bridges. My whole industry is about that. And I'm very happy to be here in Huntsville.

I'm very concerned about feeling that I'm in 1957. I just want to speak not necessarily and only as a clergyman who of course believes in loving our neighbor as ourselves as we practice it in our neighborhood, or our homes, or else it means nothing but words.

But I also want to speak as a white Southern person who's been ashamed of a great deal of our history. I've lived all over the world, and I find myself apologizing a great deal of the time -- I'm not gonna apologize anymore. We have come to a new day -- we cannot afford to go back. I come from a privileged background that was given to me to pay it forward. My education was given to me to pay it forward. I am not unaware of the shoulders I stand on. I stand on men's shoulders, I stand on women's shoulders who fought these battles, and the same things that are being said and feared here have been said for the past 45 years in the Deep South. Whether we call it economics or not, we have to examine our fear and instead move forward in love in a way that actually brings our children to a new place. And it is true that the least of those in this society are going to determine the strength of this city. Thank you. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Your name, sir?

*Mark Dummer:* Mark Dummer. Hi I'm Mark Dummer, can I make a few comments about the amendments to the plan, as was asked for. I'm from the South Huntsville Civic Association, some comments about the plan and these are economic and policy-related.

HHA is working to deconcentrate poverty in the City of Huntsville. It appears that the HHA has embarked on a plan to imitate social engineering, experiments have occurred in other cities throughout the country, and during the HHA board meeting on June 15<sup>th</sup> Huntsville City Council Member Sandra Moon made three requests: the third of which was for the HHA report on other public housing initiatives in communities very similar to Huntsville, and what the outcomes have been. Four months later the HHA has failed to answer this basic question.

So now we ask once again has the HHA identified a successful program that deconcentrated poverty and successfully integrated the people that these programs purport to help in the community at large? If so, what were the baseline parameters used to measure the success of the program, and where is the data that shows that a successful transitioning has occurred?

And one other item, on a local level, self-sufficiency data -- no data produced there. All of us that work for a living are asked to perform -- we're asking the same of the board. The 768 additional housing units proposed for future demolition, which I suppose grows with the amendment here, is it necessary to tear down housing that still serves the purposes for which it was originally intended? Should the HHA continue to demolish its stock of current public housing if the buildings are serviceable and maintainable? We don't think so.

No one, with the exception of the truly disabled and elderly should want to stay in public housing for an extended period of time, replacing buildings intended to serve as transitional housing with modern luxury homes and apartments, there's nothing to provide the residents with an incentive to make any transition at all.

One other thought is the public interest served when HHA property that is left vacant after housing demolition is sold to special interests or well-connected companies to profit. And then finally target higher income neighborhoods in Huntsville with public housing so that the HHA residents may benefit from higher-performing schools and other quality of life factors: do the schools in these higher-income neighborhoods have access to the Title One status that supported public housing children at their previous schools? In many cases, transferred students actually end up in a less-supportive learning environment because of the lack of access to the tutors and enrichment programs paid for with Title One funds.

The South Huntsville Civic Association supports the neighborhood school concept with the goal of each Huntsville City School being rated as high-performing. Support for each school would be allocated on an as-needed basis to achieve this goal. This would foster stronger community ownership, reduce transportation costs, and focus student support directly there needed. A current practice of transferring students or families to higher-performing schools without support has only served to overcrowd the higher-performing schools and create an even higher transportation cost. This is unfair not only for the overcrowded higher-performing school but the non-supported transfer student as well. And I'll point out that the taxpayers aren't making out very well either since there's school's half-empty and schools that are overflowing. Those were our comments about the plan and amendments. Thank you. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Mr. McAdams?

*Tom McAdams:* Mr. Chairman, other board members: thank you for this opportunity to speak. With just two days' notice, the Flemming Meadows and Westbury Estate neighbors collected on Tuesday 380 signatures to be delivered to the Huntsville Housing Authority today. This is a clear and firm demand from these two neighborhoods' residents that they do not want public housing in their neighborhoods. The petition reads:

"We the undersigned homeowners of Fleming Meadows' second, third and fourth additions subdivisions and Westbury Estates first and second additions subdivision, both having restrictions recorded in a probate judge's office of Huntsville, Madison County, Alabama do hereby demand that Huntsville Housing Authority immediately cease, stop, desist and terminate any and all efforts associated with the purchase, lease and/or rental of property in the above-state subdivisions forever."

Sort of as a spokesman for the 380 people I will repeat: immediately cease, stop, desist and terminate any and all efforts associated with the purchase, lease, and/or rental of the property in the above-stated subdivisions. [Applause].

*Jeanie Robison:* My name is Jeanie Robison, and I was struck by what the gentleman said about needing research. And as it turned out, I decided this afternoon actually to just do a very quick search off there on the internet. And this is not scientific, but I think you should take some home from the findings that are out there and available.

For instance in Fairfax, Virginia -- this is a particularly interesting study: the Housing Authority there buys units, houses and apartments, and rents them to moderate income earners. This is an attempt to provide workforce housing. The mean income level or house -- I'm sorry, the mean value of a house in Fairfax, Virginia is over \$500,000.00. Well there new recruits there police jobs, for public health officials or public health workers, for public school teachers -- they can't afford that, and so the housing authority there has bought or plans to buy -- in this case actually they have bought houses. They have provided them to these people who are of moderate income but are working.

And I think that's our housing authority is seeking to do. So I think take heart -- look out there at -- there are studies of cities in Florida, Connecticut, Colorado, Texas, Minnesota, all of which have very similar results. And I even found one study from the National Association of Realtors who are certainly concerned with preserving property values, and one of their conclusions was that values will increase when affordable housing meets three criteria, and I think this is what we need to hold the Housing Authority to, and I think they're doing it: one is that the units will be well-managed, that they're not going to fall into disrepair. That's a legitimate concern in whatever neighborhood, that there's tenant screening, which it sounds to me like that is absolutely a criteria before anyone is allowed to participate in this program, and that if you're building a new house, that there's good design in the housing that makes it blend into the other neighborhoods, even low-income housing or -- I shouldn't even say low-income, just affordable housing.

So I just think there is great hope and there is no need for the fear that we are exhibiting about what the future might bring. I don't think property values are going to decline, and I think there's good evidence to the contrary.

So I would encourage you -- use your brains, think for yourself, go out there and look it up. [Applause].

*David Andrews:*

David Andrews. I'm a resident of South Huntsville. Regarding the two Huntsville Housing Authority plans at tonight's public hearing, I believe that you're deconcentrating poverty objective is a failed social experiment with no successful national implementation. If you possess a national success story as requested by Sandra Moon in June I'm sure you would have shared it with the community by now.

I believe that targeting southeast Huntsville as you did in your 2009 amendment and higher income neighborhoods in your 2010 plan so that, I quote, "Huntsville housing residents can benefit from high-performing schools and other quality of life factors," is morally corrupt and detrimental to the property values and the affected South Huntsville neighborhoods and further, crowds our underfunded and already overcrowded schools.

I believe this Huntsville Housing Authority Board has demonstrated an arrogance of power in not coordinating with affected neighborhoods, of the Huntsville City Council before any and all property purchases are made in South Huntsville. I believe that the Huntsville Housing Authority Board has corrupted the intent of the HUD neighborhood stabilization program, which is being used to purchase single family homes in South Huntsville such as the one on Drummond. Specifically, HUD's new neighborhood stabilization program is, I quote, "Provides emergency assistance to state, local governments to acquire and redevelop foreclosed properties that might otherwise become sources of abandonment and blight within their community, so that the objective, as we read it from the HUD website as "abandonment, and to avoid sources of being abandonment and blight within our community."

So the question is does anyone on this Huntsville Housing Authority think that \$170,000.00 house on Drummond is at risk for being abandoned? Does anyone on the Huntsville Housing Authority Board think that this neighborhood is at risk for becoming blighted because of this single foreclosure? The Drummond foreclosure was only on the market for 20 days before it was under contract with the Huntsville Housing Authority, and that's from 09/25 to 10/14. This is versus 53 days, which is the average time on the market for the homes in Flemming Meadows and 73 days for the homes in the same price range in the Grisholm District.

So of course the Drummond property was not going to be abandoned, nor was it a blight to the community. The only blight in my opinion currently is the board's outrageous deconcentration poverty actions. If it's any wonder that myself and any of the other residence of South Huntsville are here tonight to protest these plans, protest the arrogance of this board, and protest your recent outrageous actions in South Huntsville. Thank you. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Is there anyone else who has signed up and requested to speak tonight that would like to speak at this time on this portion of our public hearing? Yes sir, your name please? Thank you.

*Ben Gibbons:* I'm a resident of South Huntsville. And I've sat here and I've listened to a lot of the comments. And I just want to say a couple of things. First of all, apparently the meeting was flawed that we're not -- I don't know -- apparently there's some people who think that we're talking about ending public housing. That is not the case. People are talking about how public housing has helped them. I'm sure it has. No one's talking about taking it away. We're talking about the moving of it, not whether it's going to continue or not.

Second comment: I've heard a lot of people, several people, get up here and openly accuse people they do not know of racism. These are the same people who get up here, in many cases, and talk about love for your fellow man, we're all God's children, but you're a racist.

Where does that come from? How dare you impute to people motives when you have no clue what they're doing? When you have not listened to their arguments, you don't care what their arguments are, you want what you want and you're willing to accuse them of one of the worst things you can accuse someone of in our society today, simply because what? It helps you advance your goals? It makes you feel better about yourselves? I don't know. I'm not going to speculate on that.

But if you're going to accuse people of not being filled with love and not caring for their fellow man, maybe you need to think about the accusations you throw out yourself.

The last comment I would make is this: you know, we can talk a lot about how we want the world to be. There are a lot of things I want in this world that aren't the way they are. But economics is pretty simple: it's all about incentives. It's all about what you do to improve yourself, improve your life. That's the way things work. You can't wish away things simply because you want them to be another way. And we can sit here and talk about how, "Well, people should all get along, people should all do this, and people should all do that."

People have done this in other cities, and what they done is they've ended up with a central city that has no middle class, because the middle class does not hang around and just hope that things will

get better. They go where they can have good quality of life, good schools, and all these kind of things. We don't want that to happen in Huntsville, folks.

I've heard people say they have the right to live anywhere they want; that comment's come up a lot. You're right; we all have the right to live anywhere we want. I have the right to live in The Ledges, I have the right to live in Twickenham, but you know what? I can't afford it.

I've got in neighborhood black families, Hispanic families, Asian families -- they all bought their houses just like I bought my house, they all paid their mortgages just like I paid my mortgage, we all get along fine. We've got to look at these things, folks, as the world works. We cannot sit here and use high-sounding language to try to imagine that things aren't the way they are. We all want the best for our families; we all want to do the best we can. And you can't demonize people because they're saying "I worked hard, I bought this house, and now actions are being taken which are going to make my house less valuable." That's real life folks. So let's please deal with reality. That's all. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Yes sir?

*Rev. T.C. Johnson:* Thank you. I came here as a soldier Pershing missile technician in '77. I came here because the Army sent me here. I was born here but I decided I would never live in Alabama because I came from Goshen, way down south and it was rough racially and everything else. When I went into the Army, people are so negative about Alabama it made me ashamed to say I was from Alabama so I didn't say anything for a long time, but I came to Huntsville because I changed my mind.

We're not all that we should be, and you're right you shouldn't demonize people, but as a soldier prepared to die any minute for my country which I love, I tried to buy a home in Huntsville. And the realtor never let me know that there was another side of town. Never. I never got to shop down South Parkway where I passed it for a long time.

I was an E7 and there was an E5 white guy. I bought a used house in North Huntsville. They took him to South Huntsville, he bought a new home for almost the same thing that I bought an old home for. We were best of friends.

The reality is there's a problem. I can't call people racist, I don't do that. But I think people have to look within themselves and ask the truth. You talk about Habitat Homes? Go try to put Habitat Homes in South Huntsville and see the kind of resistance you get there.

The mission moves. Expect \$3.9 million taxpayer dollars, pay for private school and move to Mission in North Huntsville. They changed the police district so that the crime in North Huntsville will be connected with the crime at the Mission. If our city was working together all of us would have went downtown and said, "This isn't right." If we continue to struggle with each other, moneys gonna do what they want to. It's time for all of us, South, North, all of us to look and see exactly what it is we're doing. Be truthful to ourselves. There are some things that we don't like about each other. But most of it is stereotypical.

Now this public housing thing is going someplace. It's not fair that it's all going to North Huntsville, but if it was, most of you would say nothing. You didn't say anything when they put a mission in the backyard of 84 families with children who have to walk by that mission to go to school. That's the past, we can't change it, but I think we ought to think about how we go forward.

I talked to Mr. Lundy, I know this is gonna be hard. But we are a leading city in the nation, and when we face problems like these, get rid of all the bitterness. We should be able to lead the nation in how to fix this problem, all of us working together. If we all work together, get rid of our stereotypical ideologies about each other we can fix this problem and make a model for the rest of the city. We've done that in other areas, why can't we do that in all areas? Thank you. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* Please state your name for us.

*Kenneth Anderson:* Good evening. I stand before you this evening very proud to say that I'm a product of public housing. Spent the first 21 years of my life growing up in a public housing community. It was on the lower side of New York City but it was still public housing. And the interesting thing about that experience for me was the fact that I never knew it was public housing until I left there and came back and noticed where I had been living for 20 years.

There's so much love in the context of our human family that we can experience if we simply put our differences aside. There's really no reason why we cannot co-exist, albeit we come from

different places, but we're cut from the same cloth. I'm a resident of this community by choice, and I believe this choice represents one of the highest ideals of living in a nation that both "offers and guarantees such freedoms for all of its citizens. All of its citizens.

I believe that with this choice comes a responsibility to respond to our challenges with dignity and intelligence. I want to believe that a community whose residence can boast of having experienced tremendous growth and progress and has been awarded national recognition can show the same commitment toward strengthening human relationships and embrace inclusion and not exclusion.

It is unfortunate for a community that has been given so much to respond to the promise of change and diversification with rhetoric, anger, fear, ignorance, venomous attacks and threats of removing elected officials from office. Issue of public housing being dispersed throughout the community is the responsibility of a compassionate, empathetic and progressive community that I believe my community Huntsville is. A community as rich and as blessed as this one -- that's my community and your community -- it's all of our community -- can surely find a way to co-exist with each other because in the end we need each other to survive.

It is my hope that we can commit towards making Huntsville the true one Huntsville that I believe it can be, and it's my prayer that in the name of the God that so many of us worship and call upon and depending upon, and so, at the very core, represents a gospel of love and peace and harmony can figure this small problem out, putting differences aside and making this work for our great city. Thank you. [Applause].

*Chairman Burruss:* We're now almost at the two-hour point in this hearing, so if there are other comments we will certainly listen to them. I would like to take a brief break before I would like to conclude this hearing, take a brief break before we begin the second of the two hearings for tonight, unless there are comments that necessarily need to be made right now. There being none I will adjourn this public hearing and we will take a five-minute break.

*[End of Audio]*