

MOVING TO WORK

PLAN AND APPLICATION

PLEASANTVILLE HOUSING AUTHORITY

Posted October 23, 2020

Vision for PVHA's MTW Program

The Pleasantville Housing Authority (PVHA) is pleased to submit the following application for the MTW Demonstration Program. The Pleasantville Housing Authority's mission is to promote adequate and affordable housing, economic independence for our residents and increase the value of its assets for long term sustainability. Our vision for MTW would be to find ways to further our mission while accomplishing the three statutory objectives: cost effectiveness, self-sufficiency, and housing choice. While PVHA will pursue all three objectives, our primary objective is to increase self-sufficiency of our residents, which is in line with promoting and creating opportunities for economic independence of our residents. We believe that there are a number of ideas that are already approved waivers in the MTW program that could be very beneficial for creating and promoting self-sufficiency. We would like to explore ideas like term limits, increased minimum rents, stepped rent programs along with increased supportive services to help residents achieve economic independence. We also want to explore ways to stop some participants from playing the system. We believe that if the rules are fair, transparent, and easy to understand it will reduce the number of participants from trying to game the system.

We look forward to implementing changes in the voucher program that will reduce the cost to administer the program, getting rid of or simplifying regulations and processes that are overly complicated and confusing to both participants and staff. There are already a number of waivers related to cost effectiveness used by current MTW agencies that we want to explore further.

Finally, in housing choice PVHA will look at changes that will increase landlord participation as well as policies that will allow the voucher participants more choice. Ideas like higher payment standards and a damage mitigation fund are well established and we think will be helpful in attracting more landlords into the program.

Statement of fair housing and other civil rights

PVHA pledges that it will carry out the programs of the agency in conformity with title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Fair Housing Act, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and title II of the American with disabilities Act of 1990, and will affirmatively further fair housing by examining its programs and proposed programs and policies, identifying impediments to fair housing choice within those programs, and addressing those impediments in a reasonable fashion in view of the resources available and working with local jurisdictions to implement any of the jurisdiction's initiatives to affirmatively further fair housing that require PVHA's involvement and by maintaining records reflecting these analyses and actions. PVHA's annual plan is consistent with the County's Consolidated plan.

Plan for Future Community/Resident Engagement

Initially, PVHA will host a series of meetings with residents and other stakeholders to explain what MTW means for PVHA and discuss the future of the agency and the MTW program. These initial meetings will form the basis of the vision for the agency's MTW plans. PVHA will form a working group consisting of staff, residents, and interested stakeholders who will work together on developing ideas for MTW that can be further developed for inclusion in the MTW Plan. After the working group has generated a rough idea of the activities that PVHA could pursue, PVHA will conduct public meetings, some in conjunction with their Board of Commissioner meetings and some stand alone to get more input and feedback on the ideas under consideration. After this public input process, PVHA will draft a final plan for public consideration and its Board's approval and submission to HUD.

PVHA will solicit input and participation in the development of the MTW plan from the local Program Coordinating Committee which is part of the PVHA's Social Services Programs.. This

collective of social service agencies and government bodies serves a broad range of consumers, including mental health, recovery, domestic violence, homeless, and other special populations.

PVHA will advertise in the remaining local paper (The Current of Pleasantville & Absecon) and the regional paper (The Press of Atlantic City) to notify the public of public hearings.

PVHA will comply with LEP regulations and provide translators as needed at public hearings. It is our goal to allow and provide for full participation by all participants regardless of communication needs. PVHA will solicit input and participation from the local Program Coordinating Committee which is part of the PVHA's Social Services Programs . This collective of social service agencies and government bodies serves a broad range of consumers, including mental health, recovery, domestic violence, homeless, and other special populations.

PHA Operating and Inventory Information

PVHA is authorized for up to 245 housing choice vouchers of which approximately 240 are currently utilized. PVHA has an increment of 39 mainstream vouchers. PVHA is currently administering 89 port ins. PVHA currently operates and maintains 207 HUD Project Based Voucher Assistance (PBV) units which were converted from public housing through the Rental Assistance Demonstration. These converted units consist of Pleasantville Towers, 80 Units and Pleasantville Towers Annex, 50 units, for a total of 130 units, with 48 efficiencies and 82 1 Bedroom units. Pleasantville Towers Annex is for elderly 62+/Disabled, while Pleasantville Towers is elderly only. New HOPE I, 36 units, 9 2-BR; 16 3-BR; 10 4-BR; and 1 5-BR units. Serving Families. New HOPE Homeownership, 41 units, 10 2-BR; 24 3-BR; and 7 4-BR units, Serving Families. New Hope was developed under the HOPE VI program as mixed finance housing using the LIHTC and public housing programs. PVHA has 51 units of housing under

the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program. PVHA also has 11 units acquired under the Neighborhood Stabilization Program.

The average household income in the voucher program is \$19,499. The average household income in the PBV units is \$18,060. In the voucher program, 86% of households identify as African American / Black, 13% identify as white, with less than 1% each identifying as Asian or American Indian, and 0% of households identifying as “other”. 16% identify as Hispanic while 84% identify as Non-Hispanic.

PVHA does not anticipate that there will be any major changes in the demographics of the households it serves. PVHA does not have plans to make major changes to the housing stock covered by MTW. It is important to point out that PVHA recently converted its public housing portfolio through RAD and was able to make much needed investments to its portfolio at that point in time, so no major plans are needed.

The major challenge facing voucher clients is assistance navigating the complex system of securing affordable housing assistance and then finding a landlord who will accept the voucher.

Plan for Local MTW Program

PVHA seeks to implement the following MTW types of initiatives in addressing local needs.

1. **Cost Effectiveness:** PVHA seeks to reduce our reliance on the federal government and make our programs as efficient as possible to operate. We believe that either a tiered rent system or a stepped rent system would decrease our administrative costs. We are also looking at several other waivers in the MTW Operations notice that could reduce costs, for example eliminating utility allowance payments and self-certification of assets. PVHA would like to

explore the possibility of fees for no shows and multiple failed inspections to landlords, which poses a current challenge for the efficiency of PVHA HCV inspectors. A couple of ideas that we are looking to explore that address local issues are 1. Making the threshold higher for doing an interim recertification and 2. Limiting the number of moves per year. There are a number of times where people quit their jobs and then want a rent reduction. We believe that work should be an important part of MTW and that you should not receive an automatic rent decrease when you quit a job. There may be good reasons to quit a job, but we do not want HCV policies to be an incentive for doing so. We think there will be a way to craft language and still have a hardship policy to make sure the policy is not indiscriminate in allowing interims when necessary while protecting program integrity. A second challenge PVHA faces are a number of residents who move every year with their voucher, this causes a lot of extra work and cost for PVHA. Sometimes they are porting in and out of our jurisdiction. PVHA wants to explore a policy limiting the number of moves over a 5-year period. We do not think that moving every year is in the best interest of the resident, any children in the household, and the reputation of the HCVP program with landlords. We feel that the limiting of move would be beneficial in solving this local issue.

2. Self-Sufficiency: PVHA is most interested in policies and approaches that will increase the self-sufficiency of non-elderly, non-disabled households. We want to break the cycle of poverty. We want to explore a number of policies that we believe will encourage self-sufficiency. For example, we want to explore term limits, higher minimum rents, and stepped rents. At the same time, we also want to provide the supportive services needed to help families break the cycle of poverty. This is one of the biggest problems we face at PVHA. We will explore partnerships with a number of other providers of social services and

workforce development services to create a program that will come alongside our participants to help them gain the tools, skills, and opportunities that they need to break the cycle of poverty.

3. PVHA also wants to examine changes to our existing HOPEVI homeownership program that seem to disincentivize homeownership for some. Currently families can be in the unit and then decide that they want to have a mobile voucher, walking away from the homeownership opportunity. We think there must be some way to improve the program resulting in more homeowners, instead of just providing a roundabout path to getting a voucher. Housing Choice: PVHA wants to increase housing choice by counseling Section 8 tenants as to location of units outside areas of poverty or minority concentration and assist them in locating those units. Market Section 8 program to owners outside areas of poverty and minority concentrations. PVHA would look to landlord incentives and higher payment standards as some of the possible tools we could use to increase housing choice.

Proposed Use of MTW Funds

PVHA does not request fungibility between Section 8 and Section 9 programs as we no longer have Section 9 funding.

PVHA would like to explore fungibility within the Section 8 program.

Evidence of Significant Partnerships

PVHA has a history of partnering with other organizations and has a number of potential partners on future MTW initiatives. We, of course, have a good partnership with the City of Pleasantville and the Atlantic County government. In particular, we have signed an

memorandum of understanding with the Atlantic County Workforce Development Board to provide supportive services to a minimum of 100 PVHA residents through its One-Stop Career Center, in conjunction with “A Proud Partner of the American Job Center Network. The One-Stop Career Center is located just a couple of blocks from PVHA offices and makes it easy for residents to be referred and get to these important services. These services focus on workforce development services, assistance to youth, adult and dislocated workers who are pursuing job readiness, academic remediation and support, job matching and job placement. At this time, an exact value of the services being leverage is to be determined, but these are valuable resources being made available to our participants as the annual budget of the One-Stop Career Center is over \$6.7 million. PVHA does not submit any funds to the operation of the One-Stop Career Center. We also work with O.C.E.A.N. Inc., a community action agency serving low and moderate-income residents in Pleasantville and surrounding areas. O.C.E.A.N. Inc. works with low-income residents to improve their quality of life and assist them in moving forward to self-sufficiency. PVHA works closely with O.C.E.A.N with resident referrals. Likewise, Jewish Family Services in Atlantic and Cape May counties works with PVHA mainly through referrals to their service programs, but we also have an MOU with JFS around homelessness issues. JFS is also a lessee in our NSP program. The Career Opportunity Development, Inc. (CODI) is an important partner who accepts many referrals from PVHA to assist residents with career development.

PVHA is also excited to have partners in the academic world like Stockton University and Atlantic-Cape Community College. Stockton University has been helpful in a number of ways over the years, including helping with our computer labs, training residents on basic computer

and internet programs, activities for elders and youth. Atlantic-Cape Community College offers our residents no-cost training and certification programs.

Community Quest accepts referrals from PVHA for supportive housing services for our residents.

Ideal Institute of Technology is a career college that has partnered with PVHA in getting our computer labs up and functional, they have also helped with digital inclusion efforts. They offer career paths outside of the casinos focusing on vocational and technical programs.

Significant Dates and Milestones for the PHA's Local MTW Program

Acceptance and Initial Resident and Public Engagement

We hope that PVHA would be admitted to the MTW Demonstration Program by February 2021. The final MTW operation notice has already been posted so that is no longer a concern in the timing. One factor that PVHA is evaluating which may impact the timing of implementation of MTW is the fact that our HOPE VI units are reaching the end of their 15-year compliance period and PVHA is hoping to bring back management in-house from the current third party management company. This would take place for the first phase in 2022 and 2022 for the second phase. We are not sure that it makes sense to try to implement some of our more ambitious plans, like rent reform at the end of a management contract that is not being renewed. It would be our preference to delay the full implementation until the transfer of management is complete, however we could also do an implementation of some the less ambitious elements earlier. We would welcome a conversation with HUD about the advantages and disadvantages of different timelines.

After formal notification of MTW acceptance PVHA would post notices and send out invitations looking for participation in the MTW working group. PVHA would hold the first meeting of the working group within 90 days of notification of official MTW status (June/July 2021). The working group would meet regularly over the next three-four months to help develop ideas and initiatives for consideration by the Board of Commissioners. (October 2021-November 2021). Staff would then brief the Board on the input and make staff recommendations for the study and further development of MTW initiatives.

In this first months, PVHA would contact its software vendor, PHA Web, to determine what MTW clients it already has and if there are software modifications already available. We would also have discussion about if it is possible to make custom programming changes to accommodate MTW changes and what the cost would be to make those changes.

PVHA's plan is that the MTW working group would continue to meet at least quarterly for two years after acceptance into the MTW Demonstration Program. This group will continue to meet to discuss and evaluate how the implementation of new MTW activities are going and whether they should be modified. After two years, PVHA will evaluate participation and may adjust the frequency of meeting. PVHA believes that during the planning and startup of MTW, input and feedback will be important in setting the direction and providing input on the implementation phases of MTW.

MTW Plan development would begin in November 2021 with researching and refining proposed initiatives as well as conducting impact analyses. Once a plan is more fully developed, but still in draft, PVHA would begin an even fuller engagement of the resident population with a series of resident meetings during February 2022. Following resident input, the draft would be published for public comment for at least 45 days prior to a public hearing in April 2022.

PVHA's Board of Commissioners would approve the final draft at either its May or June 2022 Board meeting. PVHA would then submit to HUD and seek HUD approval for moving forward with its plans January 2023.

Implementation

PVHA hopes to begin implementation of its MTW activities beginning January 2023. Some of the activities may not be fully implemented at the beginning of 2023 as we do not know exactly what will be proposed or accepted by the Board. PVHA expects that all activities proposed and approved by HUD would be implemented within the first full MTW Plan year.