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Housing Authority to Reestablish Resident Councils at its Housing Facilities as Part of Rebranding of Resident Services

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The Louis E. Brown Apartments housing community in Estate Paradise. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

The Board of Commissioners of the V.I. Housing Authority has approved a resolution for management to establish a new department that will be responsible for implementing a comprehensive approach to resident services.

“This is a rebranding of current residents services of the department and we appreciate the approval from the board,” said the housing authority's executive director, Robert Graham.

He informed the board that establishing the new image would provide an opportunity for authority. “This is an opportunity for the housing authority to put a significant service in place for residents,” he said.

The director of the resident services department will be operating from St. Thomas.

The board was told that residents over the years have wanted to see a more comprehensive approach to resident services. “We are going to ensure that the resources are available to have the department be effective and ensure that we have a focus on resident involvement through resident councils,” he said.

Resident councils are a means for public housing residents to organize themselves and exert control over their living situations, for mutual empowerment and benefit, according to the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Office of Policy Development and Research.

“This department will inherit a significant workload of not only getting residents involved through resident councils but also working with our services provider partners, specifically St. Croix Foundation partners and the organizations on nonprofits,” said Mr. Graham.

He gave assurance that the management of V.I.H.A. would also revamp its current approach to communities and ensure that “we are bringing those resident councils back to active participation in representing the residents.”

“This is an opportunity for us to refocus our efforts and have not only new leadership in our resident services, but bringing to the front participation of our residents and nonprofit service organizations,” he told the board.

The services department is expected to be expanded from six to ten employees as part of the revamp.

The board also approved resolution 3645, which seeks to authorize vouchers for the low-income budget which has a reduction of \$3 million for 2022. The subsidy from HUD was \$18.3 million but previously ranged between \$19 and \$20 million.

Mr. Graham, who presented the resolution, said that the reduction puts some level of constraints on the authority’s operations, however “we have the ability to offset the reduction in subsidy with the utilization of the capital fund and to support the operating budget,” he explained.

“So, we project a positive cash flow for the public housing projects of approximately \$200,000. That is not a great deal of change from the prior year and at the end of the year for 2021 there was approximately \$400,000 decrease in positive cash flow,” he said while disclosing that the shortfall did not have a significant impact.

“It did not dent at all the reserve that we have or the ten or nine asset management projects,” he said.