

GHA: Public Comment before City Council on Sept. 24, 2009

- My name is Jul Kamen, and I live at 1506 21st St
- I am here to raise questions and public awareness of the Galveston Housing Authority--GHA
- In his addresses both to City Council (1/8/09) and the East End (4/15/09), Executive Director Harish Krishnarao said GHA has approximately 1,200 units on Section 8 (S-8). When that list was requested (ORR on 29 June 2009), only 518 addresses were provided. Why is there such a wide discrepancy between the # stated and # provided? Their website itself states they operate 1,213 S-8 units. http://www.ghatx.org/abtus_overview.asp
- One S-8 address is around the corner from us (1927 Ave M 1/2). A history of police calls from GPD shows 112 calls/3 yrs., or 3/month. They also have an ongoing problem with trash. This is only one example. If GHA is screening their applicants and inspecting their properties as they claim, why do we have this ongoing problem in our neighborhood?
- Mr. K also said (at the East End meeting on 4/15/09) GHA pays 20-30% more than the going market rate to secure S-8 units. I personally know this to be true. We ourselves have several apts. for rent. Our property manager has told us many times that if we would accept S-8, she has people with vouchers paying more than the asking rent. This puts pressure on landlords to accept S-8, artificially inflates the market, and creates a demand from landlords for *more* S-8. Meanwhile HUD says S-8 should be at or below market rates. <http://www.cbpp.org/files/9-14-09hous.pdf> (see Reducing Rents Paid to Property Owners). Why is GHA paying more?
- During Council debate on how to allocate the \$160M disaster funds, GHA, in a 1 page letter, requested \$25M. Meanwhile, low/mod income people, applying for the same money must fill out a lengthy application.--as they should--verifying their eligibility to receive federal funds. Should we not require same from GHA?
- After Ike, family and friends asked us “What are we going to do now?” that after being flooded we would be fools to stay. But for people who have invested in Galveston it is not that easy to just throw away all we have worked for and leave. We have obligations.
- However, if you have an S-8 or public housing voucher, according to HUD http://nhl.gov/offices/pih/programs/hcv/about/fact_sheet.cfm you can move freely about the country with no commitment and no consequences. A private website called <http://www.mysection8.com> makes it easy for both landlords and tenants to enter the program. To quote from it, “The Section 8 home of your dreams is only a click away”. Would GHA solicit nationwide to create an artificial need for more public housing and S-8?

- According to HUD, <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/entitlement/> federal funds can be used for many things besides housing, such as: rehabilitation of existing structures, construction of public facilities, improvements to water and sewer, streets, neighborhood centers, and aid for creating jobs. Is GHA considering any of these options as uses for the funds?
- We all know our population is down. Supposedly we have 9,000 vacant houses. (according to [Urban Land Institute presentation, 9/16/09](#)) However, GHA is still talking about building 1500 new houses. With our population DOWN, and available housing UP--- why does GHA need to build more new houses?
- According to HUD's website, <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/entitlement/> any recipient of federal funds---meaning GHA---must have a detailed plan for citizen participation. The plan must:
 - Provide citizens with timely access to local meetings, information and records related to the proposed and actual use of funds,
 - Provide public hearings to obtain citizen views and to respond to proposals and questions at all stages of development, including assessing needs and review of performance,
 - And provide for timely written answers to written complaints and grievances.
 - Therefore, we as citizens---ALL of us--have a right, and an obligation to participate in this process.
 - If GHA wants the community to buy-in to their plans, they should welcome the input.
 - Thank you for your time.