

Why is it Necessary to Rebuild 569 units of Completely Government-Subsidized Public Housing on the Island?

By David Stanowski

President

Galveston Open Government Project, Inc.

For the C-Crewe 24 August 2011

It's NOT!

Email from HUD: 15 October 2009

From: Rodriguez, Dan [mailto:dan.rodriguez@hud.gov]

Sent: Thursday, October 15, 2009 1:52 PM

To: Warren, Sandra H; 'Jacquelyn Tarpy'

Subject: RE: Question about HUD's Position about rebuilding Galveston Public Housing Units

Dear Ms. Tarpy:

The Department of Housing and Urban Development does not currently have a one for one replacement mandate for Housing Authorities to replace units that were destroyed, demolished, and/or being redeveloped. Decisions regarding the number of units and their location is a local decision to be made by the Housing Authority Board of Commissioners.

It was a pleasure talking to you and I encourage you to share your thoughts and ideas with the Housing Authority representatives as they are currently in the process of formulating a Plan for continued assistance of the low income families in the City of Galveston who were displaced by the storm.

Have a Great Day!

Conciliation Agreement: 25 May 2010

- b. **One-For-One Replacement.** From TDHCA's affordable housing set aside out of the Hurricane Recovery Funds, no less than \$50 million shall be available for use in the City of Galveston for the one-for-one replacement of all family and elderly public housing units damaged or destroyed in Hurricane Ike. Of the remaining funds, no less than \$25 million shall be provided for the construction, reconstruction, replacement, or rehabilitation of family and elderly public housing units damaged or destroyed by The Hurricanes, with priority being given to activities which include one-for-one replacement of family and elderly public housing units within a Public Housing Authority jurisdiction, or federally funded farm labor housing.

- i. The one-for-one replacement or rehabilitation of all family and elderly public housing units that were damaged or destroyed as a result of The Hurricanes within the local jurisdictions in a manner that affirmatively furthers fair housing in compliance with phase 1 of the updated AI. Twenty million dollars shall be reserved specifically to support the one-for-one replacement of family and elderly public housing damaged or destroyed by The Hurricanes in the City of Galveston. Once all public housing units damaged or destroyed by The Hurricanes in Galveston have been addressed the reservation shall be released for other rental housing activities under this section.

Ooops! It doesn't say what the Politicians want it to say!

Since the Conciliation Agreement does NOT say that the City has to rebuild 569 Public Housing units, within the City limits, Mayor Jaworski went on a "Mission" to get the TDHCA and HUD to tell the City that the Conciliation Agreement does say that it MUST rebuild, within the City limits, or face loss of funding.

One of the first attempts is an email to HUD Assistant Secretary Mercedes Marquez on 31 August 2010 shown below:

From: Joe Jaworski

To: Marquez, Mercedes M

Cc: Herbstman, Judith Z

Sent: Tue Aug 31 14:36:06 2010

Subject: Thanks from Jaworski

Madame Assistant Secretary: Thank you for such a good visit in Galveston last week. I know the Downtown Partnership appreciated, as did I, your guidance on the Downtown vision. I am emailing you to say thanks and to request a moment to discuss with you my impression of what is going on in Galveston with our brand new Housing Authority Board's plans. I am proud of our board, and I am looking forward to seeing our public housing needs addressed in a modern, progressive and successful fashion. That is one of the reasons why I ran to be Galveston's Mayor, and I have appointed a hard-working, thoughtful Board who will achieve that vision.

I need to relate to you this: There is a renewed effort by some citizens to question the need for public housing at all. I believe the Community is due a direct answer, and I need to be the one to give it. I wish to set the record straight – by writing a guest column in our local newspaper - and I need some information from you and others to do so effectively. This is why I was speaking with Michael Allen the day before you visited in Galveston last week. I need your help in answering definitively two questions that are routinely posed by interested citizens and public housing opponents. I've answered them time and again, but the opponents (who are constituents nevertheless, so they are due 100% respect despite their increasingly partisan tone) now say only HUD can answer their question definitively. Here are the two questions: (1) Does HUD consider Galveston legally bound to replace public housing one for one under the Conciliation agreement and any other laws or agreements? (2) How much money (Ike HUD-disaster funding and otherwise) does Galveston stand to lose if it does not rebuild one for one public housing?

I have answered these questions in informal emails and numerous discussions face to face “yes we are bound, as is the State of Texas, under the Conciliation Agreement and under federal civil rights laws and our routine certifications that we affirmatively further fair housing” and “if we breach the Conciliation Agreement, we will lose not only all Ike funding (housing and non housing) but we will put at risk all future funding and even put ourselves at risk for Refunding what we have already received over the years.

At any rate, I am asking from you a written statement so I can share it with the community. If you believe it is best to get a Council resolution directing me to ask you in a formal letter I would be happy to do so.

Thank you for your service, your leadership and for your deep interest in Galveston's well-being and recovery.
Respectfully, Mayor Joe Jaworski

Joe Jaworski

One of the next attempts is another email to HUD Assistant Secretary Mercedes Marquez on 26 October 2010 shown below:

Joseph Jaworski

From: Joseph Jaworski
Sent: Tuesday, October 26, 2010 4:27 PM
To: 'Mercedes.M.Marquez@hud.gov'
Subject: A lingering question involving terms of the Conciliation Agreement and need for URGENT help

Madame Assistant Secretary: Despite the recent Galveston town hall meeting on October 13, 2010, where I felt the question was definitively resolved, we nevertheless have some in the community who still believe we have the option to build some of the 569 units OFF Galveston Island. I have even heard from a believable source that one of the editors of the Galveston newspaper claims to have had a conversation with "someone at HUD" who allegedly told him that HUD would not oppose some of the units going off the Island. HUD was the only relevant entity not represented at the town hall meeting; I know had you been there you would have been most clear.

In two days – on Thursday – Galveston City Council will consider a resolution confirming our understanding that 569 units must be restored on Galveston Island. The TDHCA and TDRA letter to me – which prompted the consideration of this Resolution – is quite clear that all 569 must be on the Island. I understand that one or more of my Councilmember colleagues intend to promote the notion that we place 100 units off the Island. Would you consider putting something in writing expressing your position? Thank you! Mayor Joe Jaworski

The “Mission” to create “Political Cover” Continues:

The Mayor receives a letter from TDHCA and TDRA on 06 October 2010

The Mayor receives a letter from Kevin Hamby on 27 October 2010

The Mayor receives a letter from Mercedes Marquez on 14 July 2011

The Question:

If it is obvious that the Conciliation Agreement says that the City has to rebuild 569 Public Housing units, within the City limits, why did the Mayor work so hard to get the “authorities” to say that it does say that?

The Answer:

If it did say that, no effort would have been necessary!