

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

GHA: Policies Versus People

GALVESTON, Texas – 08 June 2011

The City of Galveston is all abuzz over the news that GHA Executive Director, Harish Krishnarao, has been put on paid leave and asked not to return to work until a special board meeting on Monday. It is not clear how GHA's ED could be put on paid leave without a vote of the Board, at a posted meeting, but very little that the GHA does follows accepted procedures!

There is great excitement that this move signals a positive change at the GHA that will be reflected in policies that are acceptable to the voters of the City; but it is far too early to tell if this is true. All of the City's agencies are mini-City-Manager forms of government, so they suffer from the same lack of clarity, as at City Hall, as far as who is actually setting policy.

We know that the current plan to build 1,727 units (scattered sites + mixed-income + project-based vouchers) is not supported by the residents of a city drowning in 12,425 vacant housing units; we know that their plan will very likely violate Executive Order 11988, CFR 941.202, and the Fair Housing Act; and we know that the GHA proposes to spend \$253,308 per unit rebuilding Public Housing which is more than the value of the homes owned by most of the people in the City, who have paid for them themselves; but what we don't know is whether this policy was primarily the product of the ED and his staff, or the GHA Board and Mayor Jaworski.

If Mr. Krishnarao has been encouraging the Board to proceed with these ill-advised policies, then the Board may have finally awakened to

the fact that they were headed for eventual disaster, and decided it was time to find a new ED. However, if the Board was the creator and advocate of these policies, and Mr. Krishnarao attempted to advise them to consider other alternatives, then the Board may intend to make him the scapegoat for a mess of their own making.

The only way to fix what is wrong with the GHA is to implement a dramatic change in policy; not to merely change the people serving in various capacities who then carry on the previous failed policy.

The City has already suffered through the illusion that changing people would result in a change in policy. Mayor Jaworski replaced Mayor Thomas, and Mayor Jaworski replaced the entire GHA Board, and yet, the POLICY DID NOT CHANGE. Galveston remains the only city in the County with Public Housing even as it offers the worst opportunities for residents to escape from lives of intergenerational dependency and poverty.

Will changing Executive Directors result in a change in policy?

The current Mayor and GHA Board seem committed to the ill-conceived policy now in place, so it is very hard to imagine that a change of EDs will make any noticeable change, but we are open to being pleasantly surprised!

We remain optimistic that the policies of the GHA will become the focus of Congressional hearings this summer. Having them explain their policies to Congress will make this struggle worth the effort!

Contact:

**David Stanowski, President
Galveston Open Government Project, Inc.**

<http://www.galvestonogp.org/>

409-356-6553

gogp@att.net

END