



# TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES STUDYSESSION TUESDAY, JULY17, 2012

The Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Tacoma met in Study Session at 902 South L Street, Tacoma, WA at 12:00 PM on Tuesday, July 17, 2012.

### 1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Flauding called the meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Tacoma (THA) to order at 12:04 PM.

### 2. ROLL CALL

Upon roll call, those present and absent were as follows

PRESENT	ABSENT
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#### Commissioners

Janis Flauding, Chair  
Greg Mowat, Vice Chair  
Stanley Rumbaugh, Commissioner

Arthur Banks, Commissioner

#### Staff

Michael Mirra, Executive Director  
Christine Wilson, Executive Administrator  
April Black, REMHS Director  
Nancy Vignec, Community Services Director  
Ken Shalik, Finance Director  
Todd Craven, Administration Director

Chair Flauding declared there was a quorum present at 12:05 PM.

### 3. REVIEW OF PROPOSED NON-SMOKING HOUSING POLICY

Executive Director Mirra opened the discussions. He asked our guests who would be presenting to the board to introduce themselves. He noted that the topic for the session is a policy that staff is likely to propose later in the year prohibiting smoking in THA's portfolio. THA presently prohibits smoking in common areas. The proposal would prohibit it inside dwelling units as well.

He noted that the staff were not asking the board to make a decision on that proposal at this study session. Instead, the purpose of the session is to present information that will help the board decide the matter later this year, probably in October or November. The only direction staff seeks today from the board is support for staff's intention to seek further public comment on the proposal. It would seek this comment as part of the HUD mandated process governing lease changes. Staff will compile the comments it receives as part of the later presentation to the board when staff would ask the board to make a decision.

Director Black then led the presentation. She noted that each commissioner received an extensive packet of information in advance of the study session. She emphasized that the proposed policy would not ban smokers and would not prohibit them from smoking. It would prohibit them from smoking on THA property. As part of the proposal, THA and the Health Department would offer residents smoking cessation aids.

She reviewed the consultation to date with THA residents. That consultation included meetings in all the buildings and a survey to 1,200 households that elicited a response from 343 households, or about 28% of them.

Director Black introduced Dr. Anthony Chen, Director of Health for the Tacoma Pierce County Health Department. Dr. Chen, using a powerpoint display, presented detailed information about the health risks posed by smoking and second hand smoke to both residents and THA staff who must clean these units. He noted that there is no safe level of second hand smoke, that there is no way to effectively isolate it within a multi-family building, and that smoking is a leading cause of fires. He reviewed the benefits of no-smoking housing. He noted the equity issues for low-income households who have fewer housing choices and need protection from smoke in the housing they rely upon. Dr. Chen reviewed the results of the THA resident survey, which the Health Department designed and conducted. He noted that 70% of the respondents favored a no-smoking policy. This included a majority of households that include a smoker among its members. He also reported that data show that no smoking policies help smokers to stop or reduce their own smoking. Dr. Chen concluded his remarks by stating the recommendation of the Tacoma Pierce County Health Department that THA adopt a no smoking policy. He offered the Health Department's partnership in implementing such a policy.

Julie Peterson of Comprehensive Health and Education Foundation (CHEF) and Ron Oldman of Pacific Northwest NAHRO then presented. They reported on the growing market demand for no smoking housing, the favorable experiences at other PHAs and properties that went non-smoking, the increasing liability landlords face to non-smokers seeking landlord protection from second hand smoke, and the costs savings property managers realize from a no-smoking policy, including lower unit turn costs and lower insurance rates.

The presentation opened up for questions. Commissioner Rumbaugh noted Mr. Oldham's report that landlords are increasingly facing "liability" if they do not control second hand smoke. He asked for examples. The discussion clarified that the increasing liability was not to damage claims but claims for relocation and accommodations for non-smokers who assert harm from second hand smoke.

A lively discussion ensued about the difference between smoking and alcohol usage, which can also harm others.

Commissioners asked about the proposed policy's treatment of candles and incense. Director Black explained that the proposed policy would prohibit all open flames. Portfolio manager Pat Patterson said that candles pose a fire risk and cause their own problem by leaving soot on the ceiling. Commissioner Rumbaugh noted that candles and incense are necessary for religious observances in the Jewish and Buddhist faiths. Commissioner Flauding expressed concern that while she favored a prohibition of smoking she felt that applying it to candles seemed too intrusive into the private lives of residents.

Vice Chair Mowat expressed an interest in the process of reviewing this policy and wanted to move forward with further public comment. He asked staff to find out if there was an organized source of opposition to smoking bans that THA could consult, either by collecting its literature or inviting its representatives to contribute public comment.

Commissioner Rumbaugh also expressed concern about disabled and immobile residents who cannot go outside if they want to smoke. Ms. Peterson reported on how other PHAs have addressed that situation, including with ways to deliver nicotine without smoking.

Chair Flauding asked how this policy would impact Salishan homeowners. ED Mirra stated THA has no authority over the property of others. The public areas of Salishan are under the jurisdiction of the Salishan Association.

Director Black concluded by noting that HUD favors no smoking policies. ED Mirra conveyed the views of THA staff, especially maintenance staff, who must clean up after smokers. They favor the proposed policy.

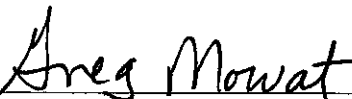
Chair Flauding, with other commissioners, stated that the board supports the staff's intention to proceed with eliciting further public comment as Director Black proposed. Director Black said she will continue working with the TPCHD and looks forward to bringing back a proposal in October or November of 2012 informed by that further public comment and by the board's comments today.

#### 4. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to conduct, Commissioner Mowat moved to adjourn, and Commissioner Rumbaugh seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 1:30 PM.

**APPROVED AS CORRECT**

**Adopted:** July 25, 2012

  
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Janis Flauding, Chair