TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

PROGRAMS COMMITTEE

9:18 a.m.
Friday,
November 12, 2004

State Capitol Extension
Room E1.038
1100 Congress
Austin, Texas

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

KENT CONINE
BETH ANDERSON
VIDAL GONZALEZ

STAFF PRESENT:

EDWINA CARRINGTON, Executive Director
EDDIE FARISS
PEGGY COLVIN

A G E N D A

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. CONINE: Okay. We'll call the committee meeting of the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs to order this morning on November 12, which is a Friday. Good to see everyone here today. It's about 9:18 a.m.

First thing on the agenda is to call roll. I'm here, I think. Beth Anderson, not here yet. Vidal Gonzalez, here. We've got two here. That's a quorum, and we will proceed. The first item of business that we have is public comment.

If you would like to address the programs committee of the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, please sign a witness affirmation form if you haven't. We will -- I've got two or three here of folks who would like to speak, in no particular order, so I'll star with the first one I have, Stella Rodriguez.

MS. RODRIGUEZ: I will speak at the agenda items --

MR. CONINE: Speak at the agenda item. Okay. Rhonda Gersch.

MS. GERSCH: At the agenda items.

MR. CONINE: Okay.

Melissa Farris.

MS. FARRIS: At the agenda items.

MR. CONINE: All right.

Mr. Henneberger.

MR. HENNEBERGER: I'm going to speak at the agenda items 4, please.

MR. CONINE: Even though it says 3 on this form.

MR. HENNEBERGER: I made a mistake.

MR. CONINE: You can't -- you don't know the difference between 3 and 4? All right.

MS. CARRINGTON: Our agenda's numbered wrong. We've got two ones. I have two 1s.

MR. CONINE: You have two 1s?

MS. CARRINGTON: I have two 1s, but you're the one --

MR. CONINE: There's only one 1.

MS. CARRINGTON: You're special.

MR. CONINE: Guess so. Mine's not wrong.

Okay. That will close the public comment for anything else other than those who want to speak at the agenda items as noted before.

The first item on the agenda is the presentation, discussion and possible approval of the minutes of the Programs Committee meeting on August 19.

Do I hear a motion?

MR. GONZALEZ: So moved.

MR. CONINE: And I'll second it, I guess. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

(A chorus of ayes.)

MR. CONINE: The motion carries.

Item 2, approval to rescind the general policy of issuance number 04-3.3.

Ms. Carrington.

MS. CARRINGTON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning. The committee will remember that last year the agency changed a policy for verification of income that we used in our weatherization program, our CEAP program and our CSBG program.

The policy previous to the state auditor's report had been that we use 30 days prior to the application for documentation of income, but the state auditor's office did recommend -- was that 30 days was not sufficient and that they were recommending that the department implement a policy for 90 days on verification of income.

The committee will remember that back last summer at a board meeting in June and also at a programs committee in August, you heard public comment from the industry and from the public on this item. And basically, they were requesting that the department reconsider this policy issuance and take it back to 90 days.

So what we are doing is bringing to the committee this morning the background on how this was changed, also information on a focus group that our staff had on September 14 of this year with our agencies that administer these programs.

And we had at that meeting -- we had 90 people attend, and we had 45 recipient organizations who were present at that meeting. And basically, the results of that meeting are on the second page of this agenda item outlining what was supported at that meeting.

And so staff is coming back to the committee and the board for reconsideration of this and asking the board to make a -- the committee to make a recommendation to the board that this policy be changed back to 90 days from 30 days.

We've reversed it. Oh, okay; sorry. From 30 days -- from 90 days back to 30 days. Thank you.

MR. CONINE: Questions?

(No response.)

MR. CONINE: I'll start out with one. You know, I think one of the reasons we had talked about going to 90 days was to get some sort of weighted average, I guess, of what's been going on with the person's life over the last 90-day period as opposed to just a 30-day snapshot.

And rescinding this back the other level -- well, at that time we felt like you could, quote unquote, manipulate the data for a 30-day period as opposed to a 90-day period. How have we addressed that issue internally as a department based on the feedback we got from the focus group?

MS. CARRINGTON: Mr. Fariss, you would be the appropriate person to answer that question for Mr. Conine.

MR. FARISS: Good morning.

MR. CONINE: Good morning.

MR. FARISS: I'm Eddie Fariss, director of the Community Affairs division. I'm not sure that I can say specifically we have done anything to avoid the manipulation, but I can point out that over the -- I have some figures in here where we have looked at monitoring for the last two years and found less than 1 percent ineligible clients while using the 30 days.

And also, for your information, anytime we do find someone whose documentation is not adequate and we find that payment to be disallowed, the agency pays that back. We also require -- and we can strengthen the requirement of documentation for 30 days.

I mean, there has been -- there -- you're right; there can be some manipulation of the figures, but it can be -- that can happen with 30; that can happen with 60; that can happen with 90. And all we can do, I guess, is pledge to be accurate in the documentation that we gather.

MR. CONINE: Most of the time both staff and the board don't generally go off half-concocted without thinking through the various issues involved.

MR. FARISS: Right.

MR. CONINE: Staff felt it was important to switch to 90 days six months ago or whenever it was.

MR. FARISS: The --

MR. CONINE: And so now staff obviously has had a change of heart. Can you --

MR. FARISS: The staff attempted to convince the state auditors of the same figures that we're -- that I -- that we provided to you and the same background information, and then we reacted to their recommendation.

MS. CARRINGTON: And I think that's correct. We did work long and hard with SAO to try to convince them that we believed that the 30-day look and the 30-day income verification was sufficient and that we were -- that our subrecipients were accurately qualifying applicants.

SAO felt fairly strongly about it. And so it was -- one, we said, Okay; we will comply with what SAO was requesting. Mr. Fariss has provided some information that's behind this action item. It doesn't have a page number, but if you'll go over about three pages, I think -- and it says, Community Affairs division proposal regarding program income guideline.

And this is the -- these are the percentages that Mr. Fariss just referenced -- and number 1, that they found less than 1 percent of the clients who were assisted were ineligible. So this is how the department has gone and looked back over the last, probably, 60 days as we've been discussing this to determine what kind of accuracy we have in our verifications.

MR. CONINE: Did the concept of the a 60-day -- you know, kind of meeting in the middle between the two come up during the discussion to the focus group?

MR. FARISS: Every conceivable way came up, every conceivable manner of determining it. Analyzing income was discussed, and the choice overwhelmingly was to allow our subrecipients to use 30 days.

There's a page here -- I think it's the second page -- that talks about the different -- it summarizes the different recommendations that we discussed during that almost full day of discussion on this issue.

MS. CARRINGTON: Thirty, 45, 60 and 90.

MR. FARISS: Right.

MR. CONINE: Okay. Why don't we --

MR. FARISS: And variations of those as well.

MR. CONINE: Any other questions about -- we can get some public comment if you'd --

MR. GONZALEZ: Well, I was just curious as far as what the difference between 30 days and 45 days would be versus 60 days.

MR. FARISS: It would just be a matter of requiring additional documentation at the time of application.

MR. GONZALEZ: It could be a situation where, you know, the last 30 days are no good. If you went just a little beyond that, you might be able to manipulate everything versus just requiring the last 30 days. That's the only concern that I have.

MR. FARISS: Well, I'm not sure that 45 days would be any more or less easily manipulated than 30 days or 90 days, but all it would mean would be to add some additional documentation requirement. But I can also tell you that the group talked about 45 days, and there was very little support for that.

MR. CONINE: And before -- again, one more question before we get public testimony. But the state auditor's office was encouraging us to go back to 30 days based on --

MS. CARRINGTON: No; they were encouraging us to go to 90 days.

MR. CONINE: Go to 90 days.

MS. CARRINGTON: We were using 30 --

MR. FARISS: Actually, what they said was that they encouraged us to increase the length of time --

MR. CONINE: Based on --

MR. FARISS: -- go longer than 30 days.

MR. CONINE: Based on what?

MR. FARISS: Based on their determination that -- well, first of all, they -- in -- when they did their audit, they visited three subrecipients. We were never -- they never shared with us at which subrecipient they reviewed client files. They didn't share with us which client files were reviewed.

So we didn't have an opportunity to see what might have happened when they looked at client files and said that 10 percent were ineligible, although we knew --

MR. CONINE: They said 10, and you found 1 percent.

MR. FARISS: They said 10. Right. And as we discussed before, they used -- when they made that determination, it was a year after income had been determined. They went to the Texas Workforce Commission and used that database, which is hindsight one year.

And as we noted in here, whether you're doing income for 30 days or 90 days, one would expect if we were doing our job that the clients' income would increase over that 12-month period. So when they went back and looked at it, there were people whose income was greater looking at the -- looking at 12 months in, you know, past -- in hindsight who were -- had been ineligible at the time they applied.

But that doesn't necessarily mean that they were ineligible at the time, because we annualize the income as opposed to looking at a complete year of data from the Texas Workforce Commission.

MR. CONINE: Okay. Let's get some public comment on this before we take any action.

Rhonda Gersch?

Are all these microphones hot down here, Delores?

MS. GRONECK: Eddie, would you turn them on.

MR. CONINE: Any of these --

[unidentified speaker]: I think they are.

MR. CONINE: Just sit down at any of those microphones, probably.

MS. GERSCH: Good morning.

MR. CONINE: Good morning.

MS. GERSCH: My name is Rhonda Gersch. I'm the executive director Combined Community Action. Our agency is located in Giddings, Texas. We provide services in ten central Texas counties. Many of them are funded by TDHCA and have been affected by this ruling.

I'm here today to voice my support for the recommendation of the TDHCA staff to rescind the 90-day rule and return to the requirement of documentation based on income for the last 30 days. I have also brought an individual who applied at our agency for assistance. Her name is Melissa Farris.

We had to turn her down because of this ruling, and I would like for her to be able to testify to you now.

MR. CONINE: Okay.

Ms. Farris, how are you?

MS. FARRIS: Good morning. Thank you. My name is Melissa Farris, and I'm here to testify in favor of the rescission of the TDHCA policy that requires 90 days of income documentation in order to apply for assistance under programs operated by the Community Action Agency.

On October 12 of this year, my husband was laid off his job as a Mitsubishi auto technician, a job he's had for 12 years. I've been a stay-at-home mom for the last two years, and I have a seven-year-old and a one-year-old. Prior to that time, I've been employed in the information-technology field.

After my husband's layoff, it became clear that he was not going to be returning to work immediately, because jobs are scarce in Austin. It also became apparent that we were not going to be able to pay our electric bill of $178.

My husband and I have never asked for help before, and over his objections, I called Combined Community Action. The caseworker explained to me that in order to determine eligibility, I would need to provide proof of the last 90 days of income.

Because my husband had been employed for a majority of the last 90 days, we were determined to be ineligible. The caseworker at the agency talked to me and provided me with other resources that we could try. My husband was able to shred a pasture behind our house to earn enough money to pay our utility bill for this month.

However, he still has not been able to find employment. Several months ago, because he was concerned about the fact that his hours were being cut, we had taken all the extra money we had and paid our rent through the end of December so we would have housing until the utility bills were coming due again.

And I don't know how we're going to pay it. Income which he received in the days prior to his layoff on October 12 will continue to disqualify us from receiving assistance if this rule remains in effect. I'm asking that the TDHCA board rescind the 90-day documentation-of-income rule so that families like ours can receive assistance. Thank you.

MR. CONINE: Thank you.

Any questions?

(No response.)

MR. CONINE: Thank you for your testimony.

Stella Rodriguez?

MS. RODRIGUEZ: Good morning.

MR. CONINE: Good morning.

MR. GONZALEZ: Good morning.

MS. RODRIGUEZ: My name is Stella Rodriguez, and I'm the director of the Texas Association of Community Action Agencies. On behalf of our member agencies, TACA wholeheartedly supports the recommendation as a community-affairs staff to rescind the 90-day income-verification policy and allow 30-day income documentation from clients in order to qualify for CSBG, CEAP and Weatherization.

In previous meetings we provided you prime case scenarios of the effect this policy has on a number of our clients, including the elderly, victims of spousal abuse, and the new poor. Individuals and families having to wait 60 to 90 days before qualifying for assistance only compounds their situation into severe crisis.

The ripple effect is that additional resources are needed to alleviate these situations. The department staff has provided you solid information in support of the recommendation, including the concrete fact that through monitoring visits and review of client files, less than 1 percent of clients assisted were ineligible.

And in those cases of ineligibility, costs were disallowed and recovered. I could go on and on and give you more case scenarios of how this policy has effected hundreds of Texans throughout the state of Texas, but I've given you that testimony in previous meetings.

I think the department staff has given you some good documentation; and you've just heard from Melissa Farris, who represents hundreds of those Texans out there that are suffering from this effect. I encourage approval of the staff's recommendation.

MR. CONINE: Okay. Thank you for your testimony.

Yes?

MR. GONZALEZ: I had a question.

MR. CONINE: All right.

MR. GONZALEZ: You mentioned that they have to wait 90 days versus 30 days for the assistance.

MS. RODRIGUEZ: When they come in for assistance and they do not qualify because of the 90 days, they're going to have to wait until they've been unemployed a much longer period of time so that when they take that income verification, they can be assisted.

But by then, it's two, three, four months down the road, and they've got major utility bills, cutoffs, reconnection fees, all kinds of expenses that are compounded.

MR. GONZALEZ: But it's not necessarily related to the 90-day income --

MS. RODRIGUEZ: Sure it is.

MR. GONZALEZ: -- versus the 30-day income.

MS. RODRIGUEZ: Yes, it is. It is specifically related, because if they had been assisted initially, those charges had not taken place.

MR. GONZALEZ: So what you're saying is if we require 30 days, they would have to only wait 30 days if for some reason they didn't qualify at that point.

MS. RODRIGUEZ: Correct.

MR. GONZALEZ: Just wanted --

MS. RODRIGUEZ: Correct.

MR. GONZALEZ: -- some clarification.

MS. RODRIGUEZ: And in reference to an earlier question you had about the 45 days, it's a nightmare trying to get documentation from clients. They just do not maintain that kind of documentation. And if they -- depending on how they get paid, it's very difficult to do a 45. So 30 days -- a more rounded number.

MR. GONZALEZ: Okay. My question is -- if they've been unemployed for 30 days versus 45 days is more what I was referring to.

MS. RODRIGUEZ: I see.

MR. GONZALEZ: If somebody didn't work for a month -- suddenly, you know, they --

MS. RODRIGUEZ: Right.

MR. GONZALEZ: The might be --

MS. RODRIGUEZ: And historically, people wait. You know, they wait before they even come. So by the time they come, they're already, you know, suffering quite a -- you know, there's some crisis there, but it's not severe.

And so if they've already waited 45 days to come to an agency for assistance, then they're going to qualify -- whereas if the 30-day policy's in place. But if they've waited 45 days and they come, they still have to wait for -- have to have 90 days of documentation. They're not going to qualify.

MR. GONZALEZ: In my thinking, there was -- let's say you were laid off. Typically, if you've been earning a salary, you're still paid some money that would allow you to make the 30- or 45-day --

MS. RODRIGUEZ: Right.

MR. GONZALEZ: -- time frame before you actually would need some major assistance. But -- and that was --

MS. RODRIGUEZ: That's not -- yes. Unfortunately, that's not the case.

MR. GONZALEZ: Okay.

MS. RODRIGUEZ: And we're hearing this

throughout the state. So is there anything --

MR. CONINE: I just continue to mentally struggle myself with the technical application of the program itself in that we're focusing on looking backwards, kind of, your 30 or 90 days, when the real issue is looking forward.

MS. RODRIGUEZ: That's true.

MR. CONINE: And Ms. Carrington, are you aware -- have we done any sort of analyzation of -- you know, maybe weighing the last 30 days of assistance, but we look forward. And I don't know technically how the program works, so I may be speaking way out of turn here.

But if they, you know, find good fortune and find a job, that there's some sort of, you know, pro rata or some sort of feedback. I just struggle with looking backwards instead of looking forward with the way this thing's administered.

MS. CARRINGTON: Mr. Fariss, do you have a -- I believe the requirements are working at previous income.

MS. RODRIGUEZ: Well, and our whole mission is to get into self-sufficiency, so we're hoping that they only come to us once for assistance, and so we help them in this small window. Then we don't see them again, because, you know, we're building to that self-sufficiency.

MR. CONINE: So let me see if I can ask a different question that might help. If we shrink it to 30 days, they come in and ask you for assistance. You know, you're administering the program. What happens the next 30 days after that?

Then they come back in a second time if they still haven't found a job to get the second month's electric-bill assistance or not?

MS. RODRIGUEZ: No. There are limits. And I don't -- can't answer to that.

MR. CONINE: Tell me how that works.

MR. FARISS: Well, we're talking about three different programs, the Weatherization Assistance Program, the Comprehensive Energy Assistance Program and the Community Services Block Grant Program, all of which, as Stella mentioned, in addition to providing assistance, attempt to provide longer-term case management and movement to self-sufficiency, whether that's energy self-sufficiency or economic self-sufficiency -- and at what level that case management is provided.

All of the programs require that income be annualized. The legislation -- in none of these three programs does the legislation mandate that it be 30 days or any other period of time. And as in some of the previous documentation that we've provided, there are a number of states that use 30 days to annualize income in all of these programs.

MR. CONINE: Let me make it a little more simple.

MR. FARISS: Okay.

MR. CONINE: Let's take Ms. Farris's case. Her husband was laid off 30 days ago. Today's November 12; he was laid off October 12. So if we had the 30-day rule in effect, today she could come in, and you'd annualize her income, and she would probably qualify or her family would qualify for assistance in three different areas, one of which would be help in paying the electric bill.

So what happens in November when he still -- excuse me; December when he still hasn't found a job and the December electric bill comes in? Tell me how the program works, and what are the limits?

MR. FARISS: Under the Comprehensive Energy Assistance Program, they would be eligible one time, unless they're served under a crisis.

Is that correct? There's a crisis program.

MS. COLVIN: Unless they're in co-pay --

MR. FARISS: Yes. The CEAP has four different components, and there's a crisis; there's regular assistance; there's co-pay, which Ms. Farris might be eligible for, which means that the agency would pay a portion and they would pay a portion for a specified period of time.

MR. CONINE: Okay. Any other questions?

(No response.)

MR. CONINE: Thank you for your testimony.

MS. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

MR. CONINE: Ms. Carrington, the staff recommendation's to go back to 30 days. Is that correct?

MS. CARRINGTON: Yes, sir, it is.

MR. CONINE: Do I hear a motion?

MR. GONZALEZ: So moved.

MS. ANDERSON: Second.

MR. CONINE: Any other discussion?

(No response.)

MR. CONINE: This is a motion to recommend to the full board, which we'll do this afternoon. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

(A chorus of ayes.)

MR. CONINE: All opposed.

(No response.)

MR. CONINE: Motion carries.

Item 3, approval of resolution concerning Section 8 payment standard.

Ms. Carrington?

MS. CARRINGTON: Thank you. This would be resolution number 04-09-8. The department as a public-housing authority needs approval on an annual basis from the board to approve the payment standard for our Housing Choice Voucher Program.

What this approval does or what this payment standard does is estimates the voucher payment's amounts for each of our fair-market areas in our PHA jurisdiction. And the board must adopt this, and we must do it -- also for each bedroom size.

And what we have done is developed a standard -- or HUD allows you to develop a standard between levels of 90 percent and 100 percent of the published fair-market rents.

And what staff is recommending to you today -- and you do have it in your materials -- is each county that we operate the Section 8 program in -- and there are some of those counties that we are recommending a payment standard that would be at 90 percent of the FMR for the area, and then there are some jurisdictions that we are recommending 100 percent of the FMR for those areas.

And the way we have determined whether it would be the 90 percent of the FMR or the 100 percent of the FMR is we have looked at the total payments that we're making right now for two-bedroom units in each of these areas and determined whether we can go a little bit under that with the payment standard or whether it needs to be 100 percent in order for the tenants to be able to find decent housing in those areas.

So if you are interested in what those payment standards are, if you go over about three pages beginning with Exhibit A -- it's the voucher payment standards for the Dallas region -- is the first one. Then the Houston region is next, and then the San Antonio region is the last one that you have.

And we are recommending a recommendation from the Programs Committee of the approval of this resolution, which does establish our payment standard for the current year for our Public Housing Authority Program.

MR. CONINE: Any -- do I hear a motion?

MS. ANDERSON: So moved.

MR. GONZALEZ: Second.

MR. CONINE: Second. Any discussion?

(No response.)

MR. CONINE: Seeing none. All those approving the motion signify by saying aye.

(A chorus of ayes.)

MR. CONINE: All opposed.

(No response.)

MR. CONINE: Motion carries.

I'm for a discussion of our Section 8 Housing Assistance Program.

Ms. Carrington?

MS. CARRINGTON: Yes, sir. What we have provided you at your request was material that had been provided previously at the June 10 Program Committee meeting, which basically provided for the committee an overview of our Section 8 program.

We reminded you that the board did approve and that HUD also did approve the consolidation of the three annual contributions contracts that we had, and that was effective July 1, '04.

We also provided you the three jurisdictions that we administer the Section 8 program in and indicated for you how many vouchers we had in each of those programs -- also a list of counties that are not served by Section 8 vouchers either by us or by another PHA.

And the one of the other questions that you had asked was what would be the impact of eliminating the Section 8 program. And that is the last sheet in your material. And we basically indicated to -- at that time we had about 2,000 vouchers that we were currently administering.

We do administer that Section 8 program through our community affairs area. We have eight staff that are involved in the administration of that program. As you all know, we do use local operators also that assist us in each of those areas.

We are -- we did put in our capital budget -- in our LAR, our legislative appropriations request for '06 and '07 the cost of some software that's called the HAPPY software. And by --

MR. CONINE: HAPPY?

MS. CARRINGTON: HAPPY. H-A-P-Y or P-P-Y? One or two Ps? Mr. Dally? Does anybody remember?

MR. DALLY: Two Ps.

MS. CARRINGTON: Okay. The HAPPY software, which is used by many large PHAs around the country to track and administer the program. One of the -- obviously one of the results -- if we do decide to transfer more large vouchers out, it's going to make the cost of that software more expensive, because we will have fewer vouchers that we actually administer.

We are in the -- well, HUD is in the process of transferring these 576 vouchers from TDHCA to Brazoria County. We believe it's actually going to be sometime probably next program year before that actually happens. My staff has been working with Brazoria County.

But it really is in HUD's hands right now as to whether -- as to when that will happen. We have provided you some dollar figures. We have about $913,000 in administrative fees that are earned from this program. We have some dollars for direct program support.

We also have some of those dollars that go for indirect functions at the agency, and then money of course that's used to pay local operators. So information item at the chair's request.

MR. CONINE: One public testimony that I had signed up, John Henneberger.

MR. HENNEBERGER: Good morning.

MR. CONINE: Good morning.

MR. GONZALEZ: Good morning.

MR. HENNEBERGER: I'm John Henneberger, the codirector of the Texas Low Income Housing Information Service. And I have spoken to you before on this issue, and I'm here again to voice my concern and my opposition to the notion that the Department of Housing and Community Affairs should transfer the vouchers to adjacent public-housing authorities.

As I've thought more about this issue, I think I've become a little bit more clear in my mind and a little bit more firm in my feelings that this would be a mistake. The nature of public-housing authorities is one of local control, and that is a concept that we support.

We supported the transfer of the certificates or vouchers that TDHCA had to Brazoria County because there was a local housing authority which was represented, which is -- has a board that's appointed by the county commissioner's court in that jurisdiction which wished to take responsibility.

The difficulty or the problem of transferring authority to adjacent jurisdictions, adjacent housing authorities, is that in essence it isn't furthering local control at all. It is simply giving an asset which is available for one community to another community without allowing the community who had the asset originally to have any authority or any representation over the administration of that asset.

And because of the portability of the vouchers, I believe that the result of this would be that these counties, these 51 counties, would quickly be stripped of the Section 8 vouchers which are available to them today. Again, a public-housing authority -- if it's a city housing authority, its board of directors is appointed by a mayor.

So -- and a county housing authority -- if it's a county housing authority, it's appointed by a county -- the county judge. There is a -- I believe it is very important that this concept that there is local democratic control over the vouchers be maintained.

And I believe that any effort to transfer these vouchers would thwart that. Thank you very much.

MR. CONINE: Would you not agree though that the county next door is a little closer than maybe Austin, Texas?

MR. HENNEBERGER: Yes, sir, but, you know, the county next door -- if I'm living in one county, then I don't get to vote for that county judge. And that county judge who's appointing that board of directors of that county's housing authority is going to have a political interest in maximizing the economic benefit of those vouchers to his county residents, not the next county over.

We elect our representatives by districts to represent us. And I wouldn't want Georgetown running the Austin -- running all the vouchers in Austin, because I don't believe that the Georgetown housing authority would be vigilant and active in making sure that those vouchers were fully utilized in Austin.

And similarly, I wouldn't want Austin running Georgetown. And I think that's what we're setting up here if we do this. And it is -- it -- control closer to the people is better, but it is important that there be some political accountability.

And as 30 other states have done, Texas has elected to play that role when there is no local political accountability for these vouchers, and I think it's important that you continue to do so.

MR. CONINE: What would you suggest or say to -- if we were to go out and visit with those counties, those actual counties that the vouchers are in, to see if they'd have an interest in putting together a housing authority for the purpose of administering the vouchers versus us doing it?

MR. HENNEBERGER: I would think that would be a very good thing to do, and I would support -- we've -- as I said, we supported the notion of transferring the vouchers to Brazoria County because they had a housing authority which represented them that would take the certificates and administer it for their citizens.

MR. CONINE: Ms. Carrington --

MR. HENNEBERGER: If any of these cities would do that, that would be the best solution.

MR. CONINE: -- how many counties are we talking about here that we -- of the ones that we have left, excluding Brazoria County?

MR. FARISS: Thirty-seven, I think.

MR. CONINE: Thirty-seven different counties which they -- there is no local city or county PHA.

MR. FARISS: In which we administer the vouchers, yes.

MS. CARRINGTON: There's actually a larger number across the state that does not -- that has no vouchers available, but we are not administering in all of those counties. I think that number is 51 at the time we did this information back last summer, but the universe is smaller for us.

MR. CONINE: Right. Any other questions from the committee members?

(No response.)

MR. CONINE: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Henneberger.

MR. HENNEBERGER: Thank you.

MR. CONINE: There's no -- this was again put on here -- put on the agenda for our discussion, no particular action, again trying to grapple with the overall program. At least I -- me personally am trying to grapple with our continued participation or whether it would be better off to take it to a local level or not.

And, you know, I guess from a next-step sort of thing, I'd be interested in the feedback of those 37 counties and/or cities. If you could kind of take a quick poll and come back to us in a couple of months, we'll see what they tell us. Be interested to hear their response.

MS. CARRINGTON: Okay. We will do that.

MR. CONINE: Okay. I don't think there's a need for an executive session, and so if that's the case, how about a motion to adjourn the Programs Committee?

MR. GONZALEZ: So moved.

MS. ANDERSON: Second.

MR. CONINE: All in favor say aye. We stand adjourned.

(Whereupon, the Programs Committee meeting was concluded.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

MEETING OF: TDHCA Programs Committee

LOCATION: Austin, Texas

DATE: November 12, 2004

I do hereby certify that the foregoing pages, numbers 1 through 34, inclusive, are the true, accurate, and complete transcript prepared from the verbal recording made by electronic recording by Penny Bynum before the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs.

11/23/2004
(Transcriber) (Date)

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