

THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HOUSING AUTHORITY

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BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS EMERGENCY MEETING

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THURSDAY,
JANUARY 17, 2019

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The Board of Commissioners met in the Executive Director's Conference Room, 1133 North Capitol Street, N.E., Washington, D.C., at 12:30 p.m., Neil Albert, Chairman, presiding.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

- NEIL ALBERT, Chairman
- KENNETH D. COUNCIL, Vice Chairman
- LEJUAN STRICKLAND, Commissioner
- ANTONIO TALIAFERRO, Commissioner
- FRANSELENE ST. JEAN, Commissioner
- NAKEISHA NEAL JONES, Commissioner
- AQUARIUS VANN-GHASRI, Commissioner

STAFF PRESENT:

- TYRONE GARRETT, Executive Director
- ALETHEA McNAIR, Manager of Board Relations

COMMISSIONER(S) ABSENT:

- BRIAN KENNER, Commissioner
- KEN GROSSINGER, Commissioner
- WILLIAM SLOVER, Commissioner

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AGENDA

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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

12:39 p.m.

CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Good afternoon, everyone.
My name is Neil Albert. And I chair the Board of
Commissioners of the D.C. Housing Authority. And
this is an emergency Board meeting being held
today, January 17, 2019 at our headquarters.

If you've been to our Board meetings
before, this is a reminder. If this is your first
time, we're asking you to silence your devices.

And we generally observe a particular
decorum during our meetings. You guys are all
adults. And so you'll know how to behave. But
we're going to have an opportunity for people to
speak here today. And so we ask that you give them
a listening ear and don't interrupt as they speak.

At this time, I'm going to actually turn
it over to our secretary to establish a quorum.

MS. McNAIR: Thank you. Commissioner
Neal Jones?

COMMISSIONER NEAL JONES: Present.

MS. McNAIR: Commissioner Ortiz Gaud?

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1 Commissioner Slover? Commissioner St. Jean?

2 COMMISSIONER ST. JEAN: Present.

3 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner Strickland?

4 COMMISSIONER STRICKLAND: Present.

5 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner Taliaferro?

6 COMMISSIONER TALIAFERRO: Present.

7 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner

8 Vann-Ghasri?

9 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Present.

10 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner Council?

11 COMMISSIONER COUNCIL: Present.

12 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner Grossinger?

13 Commissioner Kenner? Chairman Albert?

14 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Present.

15 MS. McNAIR: You have seven

16 Commissioners present. You have a quorum.

17 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you very much.

18 Today we actually just have one resolution that

19 we're going to ponder. But before we do that, I

20 want to take this opportunity to welcome our newest

21 Commissioner, Commissioner Lejuan Strickland, who

22 was just appointed by the mayor to our Board. So

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1 please join me in giving him a round of applause
2 as we welcome him.

3 (Applause.)

4 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: It is our custom to,
5 before the resolutions are presented to allow
6 members of the public to comment on the resolution.
7 The resolution today is Resolution 19-01, which
8 would adopt a framework for the stabilization and
9 repositioning of DCHA's portfolio of properties.

10 We've got a number of people that have
11 signed up to speak about the resolution. It is our
12 custom to, since I see a number of non-residents
13 signed up, to give our residents the opportunity
14 to speak first for five minutes, and then
15 non-residents, three minutes to speak.

16 So I'm going to call on Linda Brown, who
17 was not ready, to come forward. Linda, welcome.

18 MS. BROWN: Thank you. Good
19 afternoon, Commissioners. My name is Linda Brown.
20 I live in Greenleaf Senior in Ward 6. I'm here
21 today about the resolution.

22 I have concerns about the vouchers that

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1 will be given to the residents to reposition them
2 in other places. I have a daughter who is
3 disabled. She's a disabled adult.

4 And so, when you are issuing these
5 vouchers, I'm wondering if you have considered that
6 there is a waiting list for these vouchers. And
7 how are you going to prioritize the vouchers that
8 you are going to give out to the residents? And
9 how are you going to ensure the residents that these
10 vouchers would be accepted in other places?

11 With these developers, a lot of that is
12 not considered. So it's like if you are going to,
13 if you want to live somewhere else and those
14 vouchers are not acceptable, then you can't move
15 in there. So that's like being uprooted and not
16 being able to live a place where you want to live
17 in the community that you want to live in if those
18 vouchers aren't accepted.

19 So how are you going to ensure your
20 relationship with these developers that the public
21 or the residents will have some kind of safety
22 measures that they will be able to move in where

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1 they choose to move with those vouchers?

2 MR. GARRETT: Okay. Thank you, Ms.
3 Brown. First, I want to say I truly appreciate
4 your question and your concerns that you've
5 actually raised.

6 But I just need to take us back just one
7 step for not only the Board, but also the public
8 itself, is that the Housing Authority across the
9 board, DCHA, right now what we're talking about
10 with 19-01 is to adopt a framework and merely a
11 framework to look at our portfolio based on what
12 we're facing in terms of environmental and lead
13 concerns throughout the entire 8,000 units that we
14 actually have.

15 What we're trying to do is ask the Board
16 for support to create a framework that we will then
17 bring back to them on a case-by-case basis to make
18 determinations about how we handle each property.
19 So use of vouchers may be one particular vehicle
20 or it may not be.

21 And we haven't gotten there for every
22 single site. And this is the idea of this

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1 particular resolution is to take us there to create
2 a guideline that we can utilize, so when we talk
3 to the public, when we talk to our residents, we
4 can give them all those explanations of what we're
5 trying to do.

6 When you're dealing with a relocation
7 voucher, if that was the case, and we're not saying
8 that it is, but hypothetically, if we were to use
9 a relocation voucher, there would be a process in
10 which we would adopt a clear relocation plan that
11 has input from the residents and also gives clear
12 guidelines of how we would proceed to identify
13 opportunities for residents, if that's what they
14 chose to utilize.

15 MS. BROWN: Okay. A lot of these
16 properties are, as you said, are in bad shape. So,
17 when you're talking about relocating the
18 residents, where are you going to relocate them to,
19 because they're, the properties or the structures
20 that you're talking about, a lot of them are in bad
21 shape, worse than the place that you're moving
22 from?

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1 MR. GARRETT: I don't disagree with
2 you. And that's what we're trying to do. We're
3 taking this and embracing it in a manner that takes
4 that into consideration.

5 But I have to tell you, some of our
6 options don't always include actually relocating
7 residents from the current unit that they're in.
8 Some processes could be something different, which
9 could allow for rehabilitation with residents
10 remaining on site. So not everyone has to be
11 relocated.

12 It all, it's based on a case-by-case
13 basis and an analysis of what type of redevelopment
14 or rehabilitation we want to do to that particular
15 site, it at all. I mean, in some cases, we might
16 not have to do anything. It may be a stable
17 complex. That will not be on any recommendation
18 to move forward with any repositioning.

19 MS. BROWN: Okay. So, and the other
20 question is how are you going to get this
21 information to the residents. How are you going
22 to rehabilitate them and understanding what you're

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1 trying to do?

2 MR. GARRETT: That's of the, that's the
3 top of the list. The top of the list is to educate
4 not only our Board of Commissioners about our
5 processes and things that we're going to do, but
6 also to deal directly with the residents. Again,
7 residents will have input and knowledge of every
8 step that we're trying to take.

9 One thing that I did hear about this
10 particular resolution was that how transparent it
11 actually was. And that's something that under my
12 administration that we've tried to instill over the
13 last 18 months, which is a level of integrity,
14 responsibility, and accountability so that
15 everyone knows exactly what we're trying to do.
16 There are no smoke and mirrors games to my
17 administration.

18 There is change, yes. And change can
19 be difficult for many individuals and especially
20 when we're dealing with lives.

21 But we have to recognize we have a legal
22 and a moral obligation to do something. Based on

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1 our portfolio, based on its current state, we have
2 to take some steps forward. And this is just our
3 first step in that direction to change the
4 portfolio of the Housing Authority. Thank you.

5 MS. BROWN: Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you so much.
7 Next we're going to call Lori Leibowitz. Lori, you
8 have three minutes. And welcome.

9 MS. LEIBOWITZ: Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: How are you?

11 MS. LEIBOWITZ: Okay, thanks. How are
12 you?

13 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Good.

14 MS. LEIBOWITZ: Good afternoon.
15 Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.
16 My name is Lori Leibowitz. And I am an attorney
17 at Neighborhood Legal Services Program, a local
18 organization that represents thousands of D.C.
19 residents for free in a variety of cases, including
20 housing cases.

21 Before I start with my points that I was
22 going to make, I just want to flag that I realized

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1 while Ms. Brown was speaking that the version of
2 the, of Exhibit A attached to the resolution that
3 was given out when we walked in is different from
4 what I printed off the website yesterday. There
5 are more numbers in it, in Exhibit A. So I don't
6 know which -- I didn't have a chance to see which,
7 what's different or what's changed. But it is
8 different. So --

9 MR. GARRETT: We can get you a hard copy
10 --

11 MS. LEIBOWITZ: Well, I have the new
12 version.

13 MR. GARRETT: You have it? Okay.

14 MS. LEIBOWITZ: But I haven't had a
15 chance -- I just noticed it now. So I haven't had
16 a chance to look that over. And I suspect some
17 other folks haven't as well.

18 But what I was going to say is we at
19 Neighborhood Legal Services and as a D.C. resident
20 have long known that there are serious conditions
21 problems in public housing in D.C. I spend a lot
22 of time going out and visiting tenants.

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1 And I'm really glad that DCHA went
2 through and did this full assessment and is talking
3 about making plans and actually making a plan to
4 make plans to really address these major issues.
5 I think that's huge. I think that's great. Thank
6 you. Now, here's the but. The but always comes
7 with us.

8 What I'm concerned about is my reading
9 of the resolution is the only solutions that appear
10 to be under considerations are solutions that take
11 public housing out of the public housing portfolio
12 and move it to Section 8 or to other portfolios
13 which necessitate private ownership. Even if that
14 private ownership is a wholly owned subsidiary,
15 it's not quite public housing anymore.

16 And there doesn't seem to be any kind
17 of exploration of can we get the D.C. government
18 to pay for some or all of these repairs in order
19 to keep this into public housing.

20 And I think it's important that we
21 consider that option in addition to other options
22 especially, and I think it's very important that

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1 the options include really thinking about
2 preventing displacement and keeping people in
3 their communities.

4 I was at Park Morton earlier this week
5 talking to folks who have really serious conditions
6 issues in their units. And I asked every single
7 one of them like what do you want. Do you want --
8 no, no, I don't want to move. I want to stay here.
9 Even as they're telling me about what's wrong with
10 their unit, I want to stay here, I want to stay in
11 my community.

12 So I hope that as this, as DCHA moves
13 forward making plans that you will work with the
14 advocates, that you will work with the residents,
15 that you will work with the D.C. council and the
16 mayor to develop options that, a, keep our public
17 housing public and, b, really prevent displacement
18 and really help people stay in the communities that
19 they have developed over time, because it is
20 important for people to get to stay in their
21 communities. Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you so much,

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1 Lori.

2 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: I have a
3 question. I'm going to give you a hypothetical.

4 MS. LEIBOWITZ: Sure.

5 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: I live in
6 Park Morton. I just came to the Board with ten
7 residents, not the Board of Commissioners, the
8 resident have identified an adjective and when we
9 place those adjectives into a formula of words, you
10 are now living in a condemned unit.

11 If your unit is, have lead, asbestos,
12 you're complaining about your balcony that's
13 deteriorating, now the Board didn't identify it.
14 You did.

15 Now, once you made all those
16 identification, and I'm a family Commissioner.
17 Now, once you made all those -- now, I've heard this
18 over and over. Now, when I look at what you are
19 saying, and I'm applying it with 24 CFR, and 24 CFR
20 is not just about organizing.

21 Whether you like it or not, the District
22 of Columbia is a municipal corporation. It is not

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1 a state nor it's a county. We only have policies,
2 guidelines, municipal regulations in Housing and
3 Urban Development. Now, we all know that.

4 Now, once I do that and you come along
5 and somebody else next door to me, the majority of
6 them, they want to stay there. Now, one of my
7 fiduciary responsibility is to money. I'm a
8 resident first. I'm looking at your life. So I
9 didn't identify where you live at. I live in
10 Potomac Gardens. I don't identify where you live
11 at. You do.

12 So, once you make that identification,
13 you have an 11-member Board. I'm going to be
14 outvoted, because whoever was your organizer or
15 whoever -- and when I say organizer, I'm not talking
16 about Empower DC, et cetera. It could be your
17 executive board or it could be a resident
18 advocating for residents.

19 Now, the next thing I know you'll be
20 sitting in front of us telling us who you're suing
21 because we have allowed them, the person that
22 identified their own. And so we're going to go

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1 along with the masses. So we're going to let you
2 stay in Park Morton, et cetera. So now when the
3 ceiling fall down on your head, how much is the
4 lawsuit? Who will be sued? And who's going to
5 represent those tenants?

6 So, when there's a Commissioner in my
7 position when it comes to a resolution, I'm only
8 speaking for Aquarius Vann-Ghasri, the elect
9 family Commissioners. There's only three
10 Commissioners up here that's elected. Okay?

11 So, now, even though my peers have gone
12 that far with me, you share with me what should I
13 do when I know it wasn't the Board that identified
14 your community as being condemned. You did.

15 Now, you already know about how the
16 voucher goes because there's too -- first of all,
17 if I come to your legal aid, you're the first one
18 will give me my first lesson if DCHA don't.

19 So, if I already know that I live in Park
20 Morton, this is a process that's been going on since
21 the Honorable Marie Wittfield, who signed off on
22 Park Morton to have a new community. And it's not

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1 my fault, because even the Housing Authority or
2 maybe it's you, you know, your organization.

3 All I know as the Commissioner, nobody
4 like hearing my mouth, because I talk too long,
5 because I want to give you the history of your
6 community. I want you to know what the leader did
7 before you. I want you to understand what role you
8 have played in it.

9 And now, you're going to place a
10 position for three elected Commissioners that's on
11 this Board to make a decision. Do we save lives?
12 Do we make sure that the Housing Authority gets
13 sued, because you're the one who identified your
14 community? And in doing that, whomever is the
15 director of the Housing Authority is going to send
16 inspectors out there. Now, they find that's
17 right. So, now, you got -- I'm looking at that
18 area.

19 Now, we're talking about
20 gentrification. And we are talking about public
21 housing. Now, you have two types of public
22 housing. You have traditional, conventional

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1 public housing. And I don't live in conventional
2 public housing in Potomac Gardens. But Park
3 Morton does.

4 Now, what's the difference? In
5 Potomac Gardens, in order for it to have a life
6 cycle that was more than 30 years old, we had to
7 have assets management to come in. That was a
8 change, because without it, we would have never
9 lived on that hill this long for anything else to
10 happen.

11 Now, let's flip it. Now, let's look at
12 other public housing communities around here.
13 Right up the street from you, whether you know it
14 or not, there's Julius Hobson Plaza. The
15 residents that live there never said tore them
16 down. What they did was they had a class first.
17 They understood real estate. And I'm not talking
18 about Sursum Corda. I'm talking about 80 New York
19 Avenue.

20 Now, right today, you see the average
21 person that lives there have no education, came
22 under the Barry administration, had civil service

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1 exams, had a job. And to date, they own their
2 condos. Bates Street, they own their houses.
3 That's under Jasper Burnett and the honorable late
4 Bob Moore.

5 I have a problem as a Commissioner when
6 we all are so intelligent. You have resident
7 council presidents that sit before me just like you
8 who have been there for 20 years. Now, you want
9 to flip. And you have new residents coming every
10 day.

11 The question is not how residents get
12 informed. The question is how will they
13 continuously to get informed without a cell phone,
14 without coming down here. Okay. I don't know how
15 to read. So, when you mail something to me, that
16 don't mean nothing either.

17 So now, I'm caught, I'm really caught,
18 because I don't come down here and say what I need
19 to say because just because your apartment is
20 condemned -- and I'm going to say it like it is.

21 See, the man that lives with me in my
22 public housing community, he's not on the lease.

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1 But what I do is get his friends. They're going
2 to come in and plaster. They're going to make sure
3 that I live in -- somehow mentally, here's what I
4 need you to do is to tell this Housing Authority
5 that when we're living like that and if a family
6 decides to paint their unit and keep the receipt
7 and they deduct that from our rent, because many
8 of us, we live in homes.

9 Barry Farm was somebody's home. Every
10 house in Berry Farm didn't look like somebody's
11 house. I know of residents that live in Barry Farm
12 that they did their own painting. They did their
13 own plastering. They didn't use public housing
14 refrigerators. They had their own. And if
15 necessary, they may have brought their own stove.

16 Now they're in trouble. They're in
17 trouble because they didn't go through the right
18 proper procedures, and I'm about to end it, to hook
19 up the stove.

20 So now, when you look at that whole big
21 scenario, and this has happened nationally, the
22 question is what do we do. How do you pass a

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1 resolution? Who do you listen to, your
2 constituents, or do you listen to the facts?

3 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you,
4 Commissioner.

5 MS. LEIBOWITZ: Thank you. I mean, I
6 think --

7 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Lori, and if you want
8 to respond quickly.

9 MS. LEIBOWITZ: Very quickly, I think
10 in answer to your question, I 100 percent advocate
11 that things need to be fixed, no argument from me
12 there, and that people should not be stuck living
13 in places where I would not want to live with my
14 children.

15 What I'm asking is that we explore all
16 the available options, including potentially
17 advocating with the D.C. government to put money
18 into the repairs, and that we engage advocates and
19 residents in the conversation about, you know, here
20 are the options that we've developed.

21 Here are all the numbers. Here's where
22 the problems are. Here are the bedroom sizes of

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1 where the problems are, and then how do we solve
2 this problem that we explore all the options, not
3 just some of the options, and that we really engage
4 the community in the solution.

5 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: All right. Thanks
6 so much.

7 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Thank you
8 so much.

9 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Amanda Korber?
10 Welcome.

11 MS. KORBER: Thank you. Thank you for
12 the opportunity to speak today. My name is Amanda
13 Korber. I am a staff attorney at the Legal Aid
14 Society of the District of Columbia. I'm here to
15 share Legal Aid's concerns about this resolution
16 specifically and also about the direction DCHA
17 appears to be going with its public housing stock
18 generally.

19 We have never, the advocacy community
20 has never rejected the notion that the District's
21 public housing is in need of serious repair. What
22 we do reject is a resolution, this resolution that

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1 only requires DCHA to explore one way out of this
2 problem, especially when that one way out of the
3 problem is privatization.

4 Privatizing public housing is not new
5 in D.C. And we have seen firsthand that
6 privatization, what privatization has done to
7 public housing tenants and their homes.

8 Prior recent private developments are
9 already falling apart and in disrepair and have
10 management companies that don't know or don't care
11 to follow critical public housing rules, which puts
12 all public housing tenants at risk.

13 It seems like you understand these
14 concerns. In your resolution, you note that
15 privatizing public housing can lead to the loss of
16 tenants' rights, to DCHA's loss of control over the
17 economic value of its properties, and just loss of
18 control over the properties generally, the loss of
19 long-term affordability, and the degradation in
20 tenants' quality of life.

21 These concerns that you accurately lay
22 out in your resolution are precisely why DCHA

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1 should be required to explore alternatives, such
2 as working with the local District government to
3 preserve our public housing stock before rushing
4 to privatize to dig ourselves out of this problem.

5 Therefore, Legal Aid requests the Board
6 require DCHA to do the following.

7 Share with tenants and advocates all
8 reports in its possession regarding the condition
9 of its public housing properties and the projected
10 costs of needed repairs so that we can adequately
11 assess any plan the Agency puts forth to resolve
12 these problems.

13 Prepare multiple plans for the
14 preservation of public housing, including at least
15 one that does not involve privatizing and selling
16 off people's homes, and working with tenants and
17 advocates to develop these plans before presenting
18 them to the Board.

19 It's alarming to Legal Aid that a
20 resolution as important as this is being considered
21 before DCHA has talked to tenants and advocates to
22 get input about what its priorities should be while

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1 developing its redevelopment framework.

2 We would urge the Board to delay voting
3 on this resolution. But if you are going to pass
4 it, we urge you to require DCHA to, at a minimum,
5 consult with its residents and incorporate their
6 input before making plans that can change the
7 course of their lives.

8 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you so much.

9 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: I'd like to
10 say something on that, too. As I stated, Potomac
11 Gardens is private. The only problem I have with
12 privatization is the unions, because the
13 maintenance and those who staff it, they are not
14 in the union.

15 And what I see there is this. I see
16 that living in Potomac Gardens, when my manager has
17 three and four and five complaints because the
18 person that came in your unit did not prepare it
19 properly, they fire him. They don't have to go
20 through no grievance. You maybe can get your
21 unemployment.

22 If you are managed by DCHA, you're in

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1 the union and you have the right to grieve. So the
2 only thing I see with, when you privatize a public
3 housing, you're cutting out the right of a person
4 with the union. So that's something that you have
5 to think about with that.

6 Now, let's look at the trends. Sursum
7 Corda was privatized. And the District of
8 Columbia Housing Authority owned those 29 units,
9 townhouses that's called a turnkey. With Sursum
10 Corda being private, it outlasted the life circle.
11 When gentrification came through, every tenant in
12 there received a check in their name with dollars,
13 along with a federal voucher.

14 And I want to know why Legal Aid is not
15 looking to make sure that the rest of the
16 communities that may be at threat will educate our
17 resident councils how to make that happen in their
18 communities. You already have a model. So why
19 are you keep on trying to keep the wheel going?

20 We cannot keep looking at what has
21 already been done. Now, the only thing we need now
22 in the District of Columbia, we need your

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1 organization to get out there and write the perfect
2 community benefit program for economically
3 challenged individuals.

4 Now, we had under the Marion Barry
5 administration, like let me give you example like
6 James Creek. Can James Creek be something that the
7 city would allow only public housing residents to
8 purchase their home in James Creek for one dollar?

9 You can only -- in order to do that, you
10 have to live in public housing or you have to live
11 in the housing choice voucher program. And those
12 residents in James Creek that do not have that
13 vision, then the Housing Authority moved them.
14 And those of us who have that vision, we have the
15 right to purchase them homes as is just like a
16 lottery. That's thinking out of the box.

17 And we have residents in public housing
18 that can do that. Public housing residents have
19 degrees from PhDs to masters and AAs. They just
20 never had the opportunity to be employed. So what
21 are we going to do about it?

22 MS. KORBER: I agree with everything

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1 you are saying, which is why I think it's so
2 important that the Housing Authority, and I know
3 Mr. Garrett talked about getting community input,
4 why I think it's so important to get their input,
5 because I think the residents have the most
6 valuable ideas in --

7 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Mr.
8 Garrett came to my property, Potomac Gardens. He
9 received the input. The input is I support
10 privatization. My community don't. They want a
11 change.

12 So I told Mr. Garrett the change is
13 we'll go back to DCHA and let DCHA manage it. It's
14 already have lived a 15-year life cycle with
15 privatization. It was a success.

16 That's why I'm not running for the
17 Commissioner either, because I want to go down with
18 assets management and I want people to see a trend.
19 And when Mr. Garrett says that we've done something
20 for 15 years and it needs now to be turned back over
21 to DCHA to see what, because DCHA should be able
22 to do that, let me go on record and say this.

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1 As residents, if you're not educated
2 and you're listening to the wrong messenger and you
3 don't want to educate yourself, you're going to get
4 what you ask for. And when you get it and living
5 in a municipal corporation, please don't come back
6 up here and say you didn't know, because your
7 resident council president's been trying to tell
8 you. The advocacy group been trying to tell you.
9 The attorney's been trying to tell you.

10 But, guess what? If you're going to
11 have a democracy, the democracy is whatever the
12 majority want, I'm going to make sure you get it.
13 And when you live with it, remember this. You're
14 speak it into existence.

15 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you,
16 Commissioner. Thank you, Amanda.

17 MS. KORBER: Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Appreciate your
19 comments. Rebecca Lindhurst? Welcome.

20 MS. LINDHURST: Thank you. Excuse me.
21 I have a little frog in my throat. Good afternoon.
22 My name is Rebecca Lindhurst. I'm a managing

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1 attorney at Bread for the City's legal clinic.
2 It's good to see you all.

3 Thank you for the opportunity to speak
4 today. Admittedly, in the 16 years I've been doing
5 this work, this is the first time I've ever
6 testified before the Board of Commissioners.

7 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Well, welcome again.

8 MS. LINDHURST: The fear invoked by
9 this resolution, however, left me no choice but to
10 come and speak today.

11 Over the last two decades, advocates
12 have participated in countless robust discussions
13 with D.C. Housing Authority. We've discussed
14 everything from pet policies to how to deal with
15 the unwieldy waiting list. The collaboration has
16 been fruitful and, in my opinion, led to better
17 programs and policies for the thousands who depend
18 on DCHA for affordable housing.

19 However, I've been disappointed in
20 DCHA's current unwillingness to work with
21 advocates. Bread for the City, Washington Legal
22 Clinic for the Homeless, and Legal Aid, and other

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1 organizations have long been partners with this
2 agency in thinking through difficult policy
3 initiatives and ensuring that our clients'
4 interests are protected.

5 The exclusion of advocates in
6 discussions about the direction of the agency over
7 the past few months is deeply concerning. Our
8 agencies have fought alongside DCHA for decades to
9 provide housing for those most in need. We have
10 the historical knowledge and institutional memory
11 that can benefit its current leaders, yet we've
12 been shut out.

13 Our ask today is that advocates get a
14 seat at the table and that we get answers to the
15 questions we've been posing for some time. We'd
16 like to have a conversation about the problems
17 presented by this resolution. We'd like to see the
18 data that's available. While advocates have asked
19 for data, we've been in the dark about the findings.

20 We'd like to discuss an analysis of the
21 cost of all the competing options, including an
22 option that doesn't result in the loss or

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1 privatization of public housing.

2 We'd like to consider with you whether
3 renovation can be done without displacement. We'd
4 like to know what opportunities will exist for
5 resident input and community involvement.

6 Also, we'd like to consider what, if
7 any, conversations have happened with the city
8 council about funding all of the potential options.

9 The resolution appears to be a vaguely
10 worded blueprint to give DCHA the power to make
11 decisions about communities without any input, but
12 more likely appears to be a threat to public housing
13 as we know it.

14 And more concerning, it includes the
15 ability to get around the commitment to build first
16 at some properties, which should be a priority for
17 everyone involved.

18 Frankly, the possibilities for
19 residents of public housing presented by this
20 resolution are terrifying. While we clearly don't
21 want residents to remain in housing that is unsafe
22 or unhealthy, moving forward with an emergency

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1 resolution is not the answer.

2 As you know from a historical
3 perspective, D.C. has a terrible track record of
4 destroying communities of color through
5 redevelopment. Beginning with the destruction of
6 a predominantly African American community in
7 Southwest in the '60s and more recently the
8 demolition of Arthur Capper/Carrollsburg, the
9 redevelopment has displaced thousands of people of
10 color.

11 One of my first cases was representing
12 a woman who was one of the last residents living
13 in the family section of Arthur Capper. She is
14 still bouncing around with her voucher, still
15 unstably housed.

16 Finally, I'll note that this resolution
17 seems to make an end run around the commitment to
18 build first at sites like Park Morton. That site
19 provides a real opportunity to do redevelopment in
20 a thoughtful way. Ensuring that no residents are
21 displaced from the community prevents tragedies at
22 Southwest and Capper/Carrollsburg.

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1 While not immediate, it's the right
2 thing to do so that residents who have lived in that
3 neighborhood for decades can continue to live in
4 a prospering community and enjoy the amenities that
5 have built up around them in recent years. Thank
6 you.

7 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you so much --

8 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: I've got a
9 question --

10 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Can you hold a
11 second?

12 MR. GARRETT: Commissioner
13 Vann-Ghasri, thank you. I just want to speak.

14 I believe, Commissioners, you also know
15 that in our process of bringing this resolution to
16 you and earlier in our symposium, Mackenzie worked
17 with us. Mackenzie also did interviews with
18 stakeholders, understanding that we were going to
19 be bringing ideas and concepts like this to the
20 table.

21 And they actually spoke to Ms.
22 Lindhurst I think directly about her position on

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1 our portfolio and some of our efforts that we were
2 going to be taking. So there was a direct
3 communication.

4 In addition, just in December I held a
5 meeting with the advocates, as we do every three
6 months. I come to the meetings. And we discussed
7 the overall portfolio and the stabilization and the
8 need to garner partners.

9 And there was the request for a
10 subcommittee to be created with the Housing
11 Authority and the actual advocates. And that
12 occurred actually in December.

13 And I believe there was a
14 representative from Bread for the City who asked
15 for a link to our risk assessments, which
16 identified all of our properties which we had done
17 lead risk assessments. So that analysis was
18 available, and it actually was offered and
19 requested and offered at our last advocate meeting.

20 So there is dialogue between the
21 Housing Authority and the advocates. Whether or
22 not we agree on all terms, that remains to be seen.

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1 And we're going to try our best to work through it.

2 We're not trying by any means to
3 displace anyone. And I need to make that clear.
4 We're looking for an opportunity to figure out a
5 way to sustain and stabilize our portfolio as it
6 currently exists, understanding our needs of \$1.3
7 billion over 10 years with 343 needed in the next
8 year.

9 And when we talk about what are our
10 options, yes, maintaining public housing in its
11 current state is an option that we are going to
12 explore. But it will take a strong commitment from
13 various stakeholders. And if we don't have that
14 commitment, then we're going to have to explore
15 other options that may be outside of the
16 conventional public housing approach.

17 But asking the District government for
18 support is on our priority list. That's one thing
19 that we are doing and have done thus far. And
20 there's going to be ongoing communications about
21 that.

22 So I don't want anyone to think that

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1 we're not exploring all the opportunities, the only
2 thing that we can do is to go outside of the Section
3 9 program. That's not the case. And in terms of
4 displacing residents or purposely displacing
5 residents, that's not something my administration
6 is going to do.

7 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you.

8 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Rebecca, I
9 just want to know this. In your role as Bread for
10 the City, and this deals with vouchers, have Bread
11 for the City yet did any type of trend on rental
12 discrimination among people of color using the
13 vouchers once they received the vouchers during
14 relocation?

15 MS. LINDHURST: I actually skipped
16 that paragraph of my testimony because I was out
17 of time. So I --

18 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: You have
19 the right now to answer that question.

20 MS. LINDHURST: Thank you. We have
21 serious concerns about relocating folks with
22 vouchers. The market is saturated. We get calls,

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1 so many calls from residents who are trying to use
2 a voucher and can't use it because landlords are
3 discriminating against them, landlords don't want
4 to take vouchers. There isn't enough enforcement
5 of the non-discrimination against voucher holders
6 in the District.

7 And frankly, most folks are using their
8 vouchers in neighborhoods that are east of the
9 river or in neighborhoods where there isn't access
10 to public transportation, isn't access to grocery
11 stores or doctors or other needs in the community.

12 So, when we look at folks who are living
13 in properties that are in neighborhoods that are
14 developing, we need to keep those residents in
15 those neighborhoods, because giving folks a
16 voucher really ends up with folks bouncing around,
17 living in substandard properties.

18 I know you all inspect properties. But
19 there are so many voucher properties that are not
20 in compliance with the housing code. And folks
21 with poor credit or have a landlord-tenant eviction
22 case on their record, it's almost impossible for

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1 them to use a voucher.

2 And to top it all off, DCHA has
3 instituted a new policy where they're snatching
4 people's vouchers back if they don't use them fast
5 enough. And so we've got people who finally get
6 a voucher and then lose it because the market can't
7 take vouchers.

8 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Redlining,
9 do you find with Bread for the City that residents
10 who are in a position to take their voucher to use
11 as a down payment for housing? Have Bread for the
12 City been keeping a trend on any redlining
13 practices? Is that existing in the District --

14 MS. LINDHURST: Do you mean for home
15 purchase?

16 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Yes, as it
17 --

18 MS. LINDHURST: We haven't really
19 worked with any home purchase. I did a few a decade
20 ago. But I haven't helped any voucher holders
21 purchase --

22 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: So your

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1 concentration really has been mostly with public
2 housing. You've been helping a lot with
3 relocation and some of our issues with using
4 vouchers with our slum landlords.

5 Now, let me ask you another question,
6 whether or not Bread for the City have a list of
7 slum landlords. At one point in time, the
8 Washington Post, if you recall, used to place and
9 let us know all the slum landlords. That is no
10 longer a feature, whether, it's not even in social
11 media with them.

12 So my question would be whether or not
13 Bread for the City is keeping a trend of slum
14 landlords in all eight wards of the District of
15 Columbia.

16 MS. LINDHURST: We certainly have
17 repeat landlords that we struggle with. I think
18 more importantly the attorney general has been
19 prosecuting landlords that are not doing the right
20 thing by their residents. And so I think the
21 target has been to sue landlords who aren't
22 maintaining their properties.

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1 You know, the names I'm not going to say
2 here, but are certainly in the newspaper on a
3 regular basis. We know those names. We don't
4 maintain a particular list. I think it's just
5 familiarity with, oh that guy, he rents to voucher
6 holders because he can, you know, he seems like he
7 can get away with not taking care of their
8 properties.

9 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Rebecca, thank you
10 so much.

11 MS. LINDHURST: Thank you.

12 MR. GARRETT: Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Nathaniel Aquino?
14 Welcome.

15 MR. AQUINO: Thank you very much.
16 Good afternoon. My name is Nathaniel Aquino. And
17 I'm an attorney with AARP's Legal Counsel for the
18 Elderly. We are a non-profit organization whose
19 goals are to protect, defend, and empower
20 low-income residents 60 years and older.

21 First, I would like to thank the Board
22 of Commissioners for the opportunity to testify

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1 today.

2 At the outset, what I would like to make
3 clear, and I think a lot of the testimony that we've
4 already heard today has touched on this, is that
5 no tenant who has to live in substandard housing
6 conditions wishes to do so for any longer than they
7 have to.

8 For years, tenants and tenant advocates
9 have raised issues that Resolution 19-01 seem to
10 address, which is that DCHA's housing stock is
11 falling apart. For years, Legal Counsel for the
12 Elderly and other advocates have testified before
13 the D.C. council about the worsening conditions in
14 public housing units.

15 And for just as many years, DCHA has
16 deferred making repairs, giving various reasons
17 for its inability to do so. Again, public housing
18 tenants want and deserve safe, sanitary, and
19 habitable housing just as this Board does.

20 But I'm testifying today to make two
21 points. First, this resolution purports to
22 drastically alter the very nature of the public

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1 housing program through the transfer of ownership
2 and the subsidy conversion. Doing so would
3 diminish vital tenant rights beyond repair.

4 Second, by hastily rushing through this
5 process without providing any information to the
6 public or seeking the input from tenants or their
7 advocates, this proposal sends a chilling message,
8 whether intended or not, that DCHA is making
9 decisions without key stakeholders' input, or
10 excuse me, key stakeholder input from tenants most
11 affected by these changes.

12 This is particularly disappointing
13 given a long-term spirit of collaboration between
14 the Housing Authority and organizations such as
15 Legal Counsel for the Elderly.

16 Now, we did note that there is a vague
17 reference in one of the exhibits to making every
18 attempt allowable under the law to not diminish
19 tenants' rights. However, by its very nature, the
20 inclusion of such a caveat acknowledges the fact
21 that invaluable rights may be lost.

22 For instance, what transfer rights will

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1 tenants have in these new units? As we know,
2 relocation of 160-plus Arthur Capper residents
3 took over 3 months to accomplish and that
4 cooperation, and it took the cooperation of
5 numerous agencies and organizations.

6 Additionally, due process rights will
7 be impacted, due process rights such as the right
8 to review one's file, the requirements that all
9 public housing leases require good cause as
10 standard for eviction, the right to a written
11 notice of termination stating with specificity any
12 reason for termination so as to allow the tenant
13 an opportunity to prepare her defense, the right
14 to an informal conference with public housing
15 officials in most cases, and the right to a formal
16 grievance hearing before an impartial decision
17 maker in most instances.

18 This is just a quick sampling, but it's
19 clear that transferring ownership to private
20 entities or subsidy, or changing a subsidy type
21 irreparably strips public housing tenants of their
22 essential rights.

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1 In light of what is at stake, it is
2 critical that DCHA not forge ahead with this
3 proposal without first providing information to
4 the public and seeking input from those most
5 directly impacted. It is essential that DCHA
6 provide data and comparative analyses as to other
7 competing options.

8 We, therefore, implore this Board to
9 table this proposal that strips public housing
10 tenants of their most essential rights, instead,
11 give DCHA staff, stakeholders, city council,
12 tenants, tenant advocates time to sit down and
13 truly analyze what is best for the future of public
14 housing in the District of Columbia.

15 My colleagues and I at Legal Counsel for
16 the Elderly will be happy to answer any questions
17 either myself today or by follow-up email that you
18 might have going forward. And I appreciate your
19 time. Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you so much.

21 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Question.

22 MR. AQUINO: Yes, ma'am.

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1 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: My
2 question is you read the resolution, correct?

3 MR. AQUINO: Did my best,
4 Commissioner, but I echo what Ms. Lori Leibowitz
5 said earlier, which was it changed a little bit this
6 morning. And we also didn't get a copy of it until
7 just a couple of days ago. So we're doing our best
8 to scramble to be able to address what was in there.

9 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: So have you
10 ever been to an advocate meeting with the director?

11 MR. AQUINO: I go to every single one.

12 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: So, when
13 you met with the director, did he or did he not say
14 that he -- now, I'm going to be honest with you.

15 MR. AQUINO: Yes, ma'am.

16 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: To me, none
17 of you all are stakeholders. The only
18 stakeholders I know is residents.

19 So, when it comes to your organization,
20 do you have a class for the elderly who attends your
21 meetings and you share with them if you know that
22 they live in public housing or let's say you know

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1 they live in a housing choice voucher program?

2 So do you have workshops with them so
3 that they can comprehend and understand with
4 clarification and understanding and transparency
5 what is going on in their particular housing market
6 and you assign them a AARP lawyer to talk to them
7 separately if there's a misunderstanding, because
8 if you're not doing it, I challenge you to do it?
9 And you will become a partner of the District of
10 Columbia Housing Authority by helping us educate.

11 Everybody come in front of us and always
12 telling us how we're supposed to educate. Now, we
13 already got you on -- first, we weren't even
14 computer literate here. So now it took a Board of
15 Commissioners, some of the Commissioners to fight
16 so you could be on Facebook, so you could be on
17 Twitter, so you can be on social media, so that you
18 can hear what we are hearing. Okay? So that ain't
19 working.

20 Okay. So now you mailed everybody
21 letters in the mail. That ain't working because
22 the mail don't always work either. Okay.

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1 Could you give me -- seriously, do you
2 think that AARP could start a TV show? And on that
3 TV show it only going to talk about how you read
4 a resolution, tools, how to read a resolution, how
5 you read it when it impacts you, because I'm going
6 to be honest, first, it got to impact my community
7 first before I could deal with yours. If I haven't
8 cleaned up my community and advocate for it, how
9 can I advocate for yours?

10 So I'm saying that girl with the Legal
11 Aid, if all of you all could find a way to join
12 partnership with us with communication so when your
13 clients come to you, because you have that
14 one-on-one time with them, maybe you could extend
15 a more 10, 15 more minutes. And then you have them
16 sign a note or something, because, see, we don't
17 do that.

18 See, if a resident, if they have a
19 meeting here, you have the right to sign in or
20 sign-in sheets are voluntary. It's not a
21 mandatory situation. So, if this room was filled
22 up with 15 residents and they decide not to sign

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1 that sign-in sheet, you would never know 15 people
2 was here unless they do a release with a press
3 release.

4 So, if you all can all get together in
5 the next two years before the two years is over
6 with, figure out a way how you can help us to
7 communicate and get our message across so that all
8 the stakeholders, that's first the residents and
9 then you all, because all of you all already know,
10 because most of you all are lawyers, developers,
11 et cetera, whatever.

12 So, when you all get together, you all
13 don't do a lot of venting. You all come to the
14 table with a course of action and an agenda. You
15 know the purpose and the mission. There's no
16 screaming and hollering, because you already done
17 -- see, you respect each other enough to learn the
18 history of the community. And then you, okay,
19 teach us those same skills as residents so we can
20 be as successful as you. Thank you so much.

21 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you,
22 Commissioner.

1 MR. AQUINO: Madam Commissioner, I
2 appreciate the question and the comments. I think
3 one thing my colleagues and I are always trying to
4 do is to try to figure out different ways to touch
5 different people.

6 I do my best to try to talk to as many
7 resident councils and tenant associations that I
8 can, because you're absolutely right. These are
9 rights. And it's an education that needs to
10 happen. And it starts sometimes from the ground
11 up and to be proactive about it rather than being
12 reactionary, which is often what we're, what we end
13 up doing.

14 And I think we'd welcome the
15 opportunity to get into more of these buildings and
16 to talk to more tenant advocacy organizations, but
17 also tenants themselves face to face.

18 I can't, I just want to say I can't speak
19 for the AARP itself, because we are a subsidiary
20 thereof under the larger umbrella. But I can speak
21 for Legal Counsel for the Elderly in that we echo
22 your sentiments and that education is absolutely

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1 essential for all tenants and all public housing
2 residents.

3 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you so much.

4 MR. AQUINO: Thank you all for your
5 time.

6 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Courtney Alexander?
7 Welcome, Courtney.

8 MS. ALEXANDER: Hi. Thank you for the
9 opportunity. I'm Courtney Alexander. I'm with
10 the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights
11 and Urban Affairs. The committee was founded in
12 1968 for the purposes of addressing civil rights
13 violations, racial injustice, and poverty related
14 issues in Washington D.C., including racial
15 inequity and other barriers to fair housing.

16 I will say that I echo the sentiments
17 of my colleagues who have testified today. The
18 committee is deeply concerned about the approach
19 to redevelopment outlined in the resolution. And
20 we are concerned that it will not accomplish the
21 stated goal of this Commission or of this Board,
22 which is to maximize the availability of safe and

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1 affordable housing units in the District of
2 Columbia.

3 The plan as currently outlined in the
4 version of the resolution that we actually received
5 yesterday will result in the loss of deeply
6 affordable housing units in the District. And
7 this will be especially catastrophic for families
8 in need of larger units such as four and
9 five-bedroom units.

10 Additionally, perhaps what's most
11 disturbing about the version of the resolution that
12 we received is what's missing from this document.
13 And in the spirit of transparency that Director
14 Garrett mentioned, what we ask today is that
15 pertinent information actually be released to the
16 public, first and foremost the residents, but also
17 the stakeholders and the legal services community
18 that is represented here today.

19 And that information we're asking for
20 is all of the data, the reports, and other documents
21 that were used to reach the decisions and the
22 conclusions included in this resolution.

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1 Additionally, the location of the units
2 at issue was not in the version that we received,
3 a detailed analysis of the cost to repair the units
4 instead of potentially demolishing those units in
5 relation to the disposition that is contemplated
6 in the resolution.

7 We also ask that the Board assemble a
8 working group that includes a cross section of
9 stakeholders, including but not limited to legal
10 services organizations, many of which are
11 represented here today, more importantly the
12 residents, as well as other fair housing advocates.

13 We also ask that this Board postpone the
14 vote on the resolution until such time that that
15 working group has had an opportunity to review the
16 information that we're asking to be released today.

17 We also ask that you consider during
18 that interim period reviewing the full written
19 testimony of the Washington Lawyers' Committee.

20 And finally, we will say that many
21 public housing units, yes, they are in need of
22 extensive repairs. But this is not a new or an

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1 unexpected issue. In fact, many of the residents
2 that have come to this Board and the advocates in
3 the room have pleaded with DCHA to fix those issues
4 for decades. And residents have lived with those
5 issues for decades.

6 The Commission, the Commissioners, the
7 District of Columbia, DCHA, the advocates all owe
8 it to those residents to stop and take time to fully
9 and thoughtfully come up with a solution for these
10 problems that doesn't inflict further harm on those
11 residents. Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you so much.
13 Can I ask a question? Go ahead, Commissioner.

14 UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT: No, I --

15 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: So you talk a little
16 bit about assembling a working group. Could you
17 sort of give, no pun intended, a framework of what
18 that group could look like and what it would do?

19 MS. ALEXANDER: I think the primary
20 goal of that working group would be to analyze that
21 data that I mentioned to see fully what DCHA has
22 been able to see. I think there was some talk about

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1 seeing some of the lead report or some of these
2 other reports. But it is important to make
3 decisions with all available information.

4 So the first thing would be to have that
5 working group see what DCHA has been able to see,
6 and more importantly, to have all of these people
7 who are going to be affected, so residents, but also
8 the people with that legal knowledge of what their
9 rights are, what the law mandates and allows, to
10 have all of those people at the same table looking
11 at the same information and maybe coming up with
12 creative alternatives.

13 I agree. This is a massive problem,
14 and it's been going on for decades. No one
15 disagrees with that. And no one envies being kind
16 of the face of that problem.

17 But I think that with those people, the
18 right people at that table we can come up with
19 creative solutions that both target the issue, fix
20 the issue, but also don't inflict additional harm.

21 So, as far as what people would be in
22 or what organizations would be in that working

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1 group, I think it has to include residents,
2 obviously, because these are the people who have
3 to live in these communities.

4 But it should also include some of the
5 people that you heard from today who work with them
6 day in and day out, who get the phone calls about
7 the landlords who don't take vouchers when we all
8 know that's illegal. So I think those people also
9 have to be a part of that conversation. And they
10 have to have all of the available information.

11 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Appreciate it --

12 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: I'm going
13 to go a little further. I agree with you. But
14 that working group, I'm going to craft it.

15 As a public housing resident, what I
16 find is when you put -- okay, let's say hypothetical
17 that you just want to -- it's Park Morton. But when
18 you have Lincoln Heights, Richardson Dwellings,
19 and Park Morton together it's going to be chaos,
20 because we all -- see, everybody look at us as a
21 group. We're not a group.

22 MS. ALEXANDER: Absolutely.

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1 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: We're
2 territorial, whether we want to admit it or not.
3 And we come together on common grounds. We are
4 public and Indian housing.

5 So, therefore, I think the group is more
6 effective, if it's Park Morton you're dealing with,
7 the only people that need to be there are Park
8 Morton residents and Park Morton executive board.
9 And you don't need no outsiders.

10 And each community that you travel
11 through you need to talk to us, because this is what
12 happens. If you find somebody who have a mouth
13 like mine and they're from another community,
14 they're going to outtalk the person that's from
15 Park Morton. They've done used up all the time.
16 You see what I'm saying?

17 And I find that -- and here's a term that
18 I have created. In the fabric is the land. So
19 urban is the District of Columbia, because we are
20 urban municipal corporation. So, when you look at
21 the urban design of the fabric, the fabric is us.
22 We're the biggest thing going.

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1 And the residents in the District of
2 Columbia have not been taught, not been educated.
3 Now, I'm only talking about a targeted group. So,
4 when they come to the table, instead of us speaking
5 with a calm voice, we are so angry because we have
6 never, ever, ever had the opportunity to vent.

7 And then when you're going to put us in
8 working groups, you put us in working round tables
9 where you have everyone who's a facilitator that's
10 on the same page.

11 First, in order to have a conversation
12 with us, there need to be a one-on-one called
13 vocabulary and terminology course. If you can't
14 take that course, you can't be a part of the group
15 no more, because what you find is you have one group
16 of people in there. They understand the
17 terminology. They understand the vocabulary.
18 And they did these case studies, so whatever you
19 told me to do.

20 Now, you put somebody else in there. I
21 don't want to hear about something 50 years ago.
22 We're talking about right now and right then. And

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1 if you can't -- and that will go for me, too. And
2 this will be hard for me to obey the ground rules.

3 But the ground rules, that is the only
4 way that we will work ourselves out of what we're
5 doing in the District of Columbia, because, number
6 one, we have to organize residents first by
7 terminology. Can you help me with that?

8 MS. ALEXANDER: Actually, that's the
9 whole reason I'm at the Washington Lawyers'
10 Committee is to get closer to the community to
11 actually have those one-on-one conversations with
12 residents, tenant councils, all of those people.
13 I --

14 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Okay.
15 Take down my number and text me.

16 MS. ALEXANDER: Yes, ma'am.

17 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI:
18 202-627-9160. We have the target date. This is
19 January. We're going to meet in February. And
20 we're going to do it. We'll have -- February is
21 a short month. So, with your brains and my brains,
22 this should work real quick.

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1 And in March, you should be ready to do
2 what you need to do with your first group, because
3 if we don't target people right, DCHA will give you
4 the language. They will use their own papers,
5 because they already know the HUD vocabulary, our
6 vocabulary, because that's one of the problems we
7 have.

8 Residents sit there. We're talking
9 about something federal, and you give them a local
10 dialogue. Now, you're upset because the Board of
11 Commissioners vote yes, because we understood it
12 was federal. And now, you didn't understand that.
13 And so, as we go in finishing out 2019, by 2020 we
14 should be there. Okay?

15 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Courtney, I think
16 our executive director has some questions for you.

17 MR. GARRETT: I truly appreciate your
18 comments, Ms. Alexander. One thing I do want to
19 point out is that everyone who has spoken, and we've
20 discussed this many times, has talked about decades
21 of the same systemic problems happening within the
22 Authority and across our portfolio.

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1 I've been here 15 months and over that
2 15-month period directed the staff and the team to
3 create an environmental task force to go into every
4 single unit throughout our portfolio to identify
5 exactly what our actual problems are so we would
6 know how to address them. And that was the purpose
7 of what we're trying to do.

8 Our risk assessment that we have
9 performed, getting through that was important,
10 because we want the health and safety of our
11 families at the forefront of what we're trying to
12 do, in addition to our legal obligation.

13 We have no intention of displacing
14 again or treading on anyone's legal rights or
15 opportunities within our portfolio. Our
16 residents, they're our stakeholders. Those are
17 the people that we're serving, and that's part of
18 our mission.

19 What I also want to say is that what
20 we're trying to do now, this aggressive approach
21 is based on a few things. It's based on the fact
22 that we do have an infrastructure that has a

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1 timeframe on it where we have to make some
2 improvements within the next 12 months, in some
3 cases, in the shorter period, shorter timeframe
4 than 12 months based on the time we began our lead
5 risk assessments.

6 And those are things that we have been
7 discussing throughout our conversations with not
8 only the Board, but with the residents themselves
9 at each community that we have gone out to for those
10 risk assessments that we perform where there have
11 been other conversations and dialogue between the
12 administration and the residents. So our
13 residents directly know what we're doing and know
14 what we're facing.

15 In addition, this resolution is a
16 format, is a process in which we would undertake.
17 We have not identified any units for repositioning
18 or redevelopment from this resolution.

19 We have created a framework and a
20 process for which we will bring it back to the Board
21 with all that information. And in doing so, we
22 would have engaged the residents directly so that

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1 they have a clear understanding of what's going on.

2 And in closing, we've known, and I've
3 looked at documents, and I've looked at transcripts
4 where \$1.3 billion in needs, it's grown to that over
5 the course of time. So this isn't something new
6 that has just sprung up. I think what it is for
7 many people is the first time that we're
8 aggressively saying we need to stop and make a
9 change.

10 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you. Thank
11 you, Courtney. Thanks for your time. Daniel,
12 you're up. Welcome.

13 MR. DEL PIELAGO: Good afternoon,
14 Commissioners.

15 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Good afternoon.

16 MR. DEL PIELAGO: Quick question
17 before I start, what's up with Commissioner Kenner?
18 He hasn't been here in a minute. We haven't seen
19 him in a while. Is he still part of the Board?

20 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: He is still part of
21 the Board, yes.

22 MR. DEL PIELAGO: Oh, okay. Are there

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1 any regulations as to how many meetings they can
2 miss?

3 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: You can talk with the
4 Office of General Counsel --

5 MR. DEL PIELAGO: I just haven't seen
6 him in a good while. So, and I know he's very
7 involved in all of this, so just asking.

8 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Great. Thank you.

9 MR. DEL PIELAGO: Okay. I'm Daniel
10 del Pielago with Empower DC. I just want to echo
11 the sentiments of my colleagues in the legal
12 community.

13 This is, to me, this is validation that
14 we've been doing some good work, because we have
15 been urging the Housing Authority to ask for local
16 money. And I think that's a very good thing. We
17 need local investment from our government, our
18 local government, to save and improve public
19 housing as we know it. We do not want to see
20 continued loss of public housing.

21 While Director Garrett says that we're
22 not trying to displace anyone, we have displaced

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1 a lot of people. That has been the, what's
2 resulted from all of these developments we've seen,
3 Cappers, Barry Farm. We'll most likely see that
4 with Park Morton.

5 So, while there is some new energy in
6 getting a baseline of what the problems are, the
7 solutions that we see laid out here are old,
8 demolition, partnering with private developers.
9 They've all resulted in public housing residents
10 being spread around the city and historic
11 communities being lost.

12 So I just want to urge you all to
13 consider that, Board, that we really do need
14 something new. I do appreciate the director
15 saying that we're going to look at different
16 things. But that's not -- you know, we've been
17 talking about this. This came up on the advocate
18 community, the legal community, the organizing
19 community really fast. So we've been talking
20 about this. And maybe we need to look at it a
21 little bit more. But we're not seeing any new
22 solutions to it.

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1 You know, people at Barry Farm are in
2 the wind. They're not in their community anymore.
3 They're in another ward. They're in other
4 communities.

5 So, while we do agree -- I agree. I
6 don't want anybody to be living in bad conditions.
7 I don't want anybody -- you know, we've been to the
8 properties where people who have literally fallen
9 in through the ground of their home. We don't want
10 to see that. We want to see improvement.

11 But the theory of change or the actual
12 processes of change that we see and hear are nothing
13 new. And they've all led to, as I will continue
14 to say, to the loss of public housing, the loss of
15 historic communities.

16 Barry Farm is trying to do something
17 different. We're working on trying to -- you know,
18 what do residents really want and how can we support
19 residents in coming up with their own plan to do
20 what they want so we can have ownership
21 opportunities, as Commissioner Aquarius says.

22 So I would urge no votes on this until

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1 we have a real discussion on new ways of improving
2 and saving public housing. Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you, Daniel.

4 MR. GARRETT: Commissioners, and thank
5 you. I appreciate your comments. But we talk
6 about new ways when we were, earlier this morning.
7 The new ways are still very limited.

8 And what I mean by that, in terms of
9 public dollars coming into the Housing Authority,
10 I don't think there's any housing authority
11 throughout the nation that could make that type of
12 request of their city government, county
13 government, or even state for that matter, to the
14 magnitude that we need funding. We just don't have
15 that capacity.

16 And I don't think the District --
17 they've been very helpful, because we utilize the
18 repair and maintenance fund on an annual basis. We
19 apply for that. That money is given to us based
20 on the equation that the District uses. And we
21 utilize and put that money to good use. But it's
22 still not enough.

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1 And even increasing that, as I said, our
2 need for, within the next year is \$343 million to
3 actually stabilize for just within the next fiscal
4 year.

5 So what we're trying to do, we're trying
6 to look at all of our options and put them together,
7 whether it be money coming, more money coming from
8 the District, if at all possible, and a combination
9 of other resources that we might be able to put
10 together, in addition to some of these other
11 options that we're going to bring back to, not only
12 to the public, but to the advocates, but also to
13 the Board of Commissioners before any final
14 decisions are made.

15 What we're talking about, again, from
16 this resolution is just the first stage to say this
17 is the framework of how we're going to review and
18 look at this.

19 We've already uncovered everything.
20 We know what we're facing. Now, this is the
21 process and how we're going to address the next
22 decision that we have to make, whether or not we're

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1 going to put units into a rehabilitation status of
2 some sort, whether it be public money being used
3 or private equity coming in.

4 But this is just another step through
5 that particular process. And I would hope that and
6 encourage everyone to understand that this
7 administration, that's what we're moving towards.

8 And we have to move at warp speed
9 because there is some parameters by HUD that have
10 incentives attached to it where we could obviously
11 garner some more funding or additional funding to
12 help that capital improvement or that capital need
13 that we have for many of our units throughout our
14 portfolio.

15 MR. DEL PIELAGO: I appreciate it.
16 All I would respond is let's make sure we're not
17 losing more public housing and we're not displacing
18 residents out of their historic communities.

19 MR. GARRETT: I totally agree with you.

20 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you so much,
21 Daniel. Amber Harding? Welcome.

22 MS. HARDING: Thank you. Good

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1 afternoon. I'm Amber Harding. I'm an attorney at
2 the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless.

3 We agree that public housing is in a
4 serious state of disrepair. I don't need to tell
5 you how many public housing residents have
6 testified before this very commission and down at
7 the D.C. council about the terrible conditions that
8 they experience in public housing. This is not a
9 new problem.

10 In fact, we were the lawyers who brought
11 a class action against this agency in 1992 that put
12 it into receivership over its failure to maintain
13 its housing stock. That receivership lasted until
14 2000.

15 We also agree the federal government
16 has failed to adequately invest in public housing
17 infrastructure. We were there when that
18 disinvestment began. And we partnered with this
19 agency to fill the holes in its operating budget
20 with local dollars for public safety at least a
21 dozen years ago.

22 When community organizers like Empower

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1 DC began to raise the alarms about significant
2 repairs needed in public housing, the Fair Budget
3 Coalition advocated for local investments in
4 repairs to public housing.

5 We might have been more successful in
6 that advocacy if DCHA had been as transparent about
7 the crisis as it is being today. Instead, DCHA
8 leadership often claimed it could make do with much
9 less. And even when it received local money, they
10 had to be heavily pressured to use it for the health
11 and safety risks that were there.

12 Now DCHA says it needs \$343 million this
13 year to temporarily relocate residents and make
14 needed repairs to 6,695 public housing units.
15 That's 84 percent of the public housing stock. 84
16 percent is in urgent need of repair.

17 That's not a problem that develops in
18 a month, a year, or even five years. That's gross
19 negligence on a massive, unprecedented scale.

20 Nevertheless, here we are. After
21 decades of mismanagement, negligence, and ignoring
22 the pleas of public housing residents, the question

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1 comes down to what can be done.

2 Unfortunately, we're at an emergency
3 meeting with very little opportunity to engage the
4 community. And you, Commissioners, are being
5 presented with a false choice between leaving
6 thousands of public housing residents in
7 dangerously deplorable conditions and eradicating
8 a large portion of D.C.'s public housing stock and
9 displacing thousands of households.

10 And to the director's point that this
11 is just the first stage, I want to point out that
12 this first stage very clearly forecloses the option
13 we're asking you to consider.

14 If you look at paragraph 2 of your
15 resolution, it asks you to affirm that the most
16 effective available tools for addressing immediate
17 conditions and ensuring long-term financial and
18 physical viability would involve shifting
19 properties from traditional public housing subsidy
20 to a voucher system.

21 That's what you're being asked to
22 decide. And that's why all of us are here asking

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1 you to consider a different option.

2 You've a better, more obvious choice.
3 Ask the mayor and the council for the funds you need
4 to make these repairs. We'll support you in that
5 ask.

6 While the amount seems large, it's not
7 unprecedented for D.C. to invest that kind of money
8 into infrastructure and capital improvements.

9 Just last year D.C. chose to increase
10 the sales tax and raise \$178.5 million a year to
11 improve Metro infrastructure. D.C. has also
12 invested \$3 billion to modernize and renovate our
13 schools. Public housing is just as critical of an
14 infrastructure investment as schools and
15 transportation.

16 D.C. has the money to do this. In 2017,
17 D.C. had a surplus of \$287 million. That's extra
18 money it dropped into the bank and didn't spend.

19 We don't yet know the numbers from 2018.
20 But D.C. is likely to have enough to get DCHA most
21 of what it needs towards the FY19 expenditures it's
22 asking for.

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1 It's important that when developing its
2 options resolving this crisis the D.C. Housing
3 Authority consider the important and distinct role
4 that public housing plays in its housing ecosystem.

5 Many public housing households could
6 not secure units in the private market that meets
7 their needs, whether it's because there are too few
8 large family units, too few wheelchair accessible
9 units, or too few landlords that accept applicants
10 with poor credits.

11 If 2,500 public housing households are
12 forced to use a voucher instead, how many of those
13 households will have to leave D.C. to secure
14 housing?

15 We do not support leaving people in
16 uninhabitable apartments or homes where their
17 health is at risk. But we also do not support what
18 feels like the death knell for public housing,
19 converting thousands of units to vouchers or
20 redeveloping those properties into places our
21 clients will never be able to return to.

22 We urge you to require DCHA to develop

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1 an option for fully funding the repairs and
2 renovations of all the units without losing any
3 public housing stock and to ensure that there is
4 a meaningful input process for public housing
5 residents about the futures of their homes.

6 We look forward to working with the
7 agency to develop such a plan and to advocate for
8 its funding. Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Okay. Thank you so
10 much, Amber.

11 MR. GARRETT: Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Any questions for
13 Amber?

14 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: I have a
15 question. Give me that figure again, 6,690. What
16 did you say?

17 MS. HARDING: 6,695.

18 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Okay.
19 Now, let me ask you a question. So you feel that
20 the Board should vote no for this resolution.

21 MS. HARDING: I believe that the Board
22 should either vote no or modify the resolution to

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1 include that the Housing Authority needs to come
2 up with an option for repairing those 6,695 units.

3 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: So do you
4 see this resolution as a framework for
5 stabilization and repositioning?

6 MS. HARDING: I see it as a very limited
7 and narrow framework that excludes the most obvious
8 choice for how you would repair those units.

9 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: And if you
10 was in our position, how would you prepare the units
11 that now -- now, we have to keep in mind that
12 Director Garrett has only been here for 15 months.
13 I've lived through the receivership as we know.

14 And I disagreed with the receivership,
15 because the District of Columbia vacancy rate was
16 made by Congress and DPAR from the beginning. And
17 I always felt that the receivership was an attack
18 on Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly, and at which time the
19 District of Columbia didn't ask to be under
20 receivership. And we did have a city. And if you
21 know how our fundings are through Congress and then
22 the other funding is through the mayor.

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1 And I'm going to be quite frank with
2 you. As a resident of the District of Columbia
3 Housing Authority, I like the independency from,
4 being an independent agency from the mayor. And
5 I know what it was to live under a mayor. So I know
6 the difference.

7 Now, I don't -- when we look at the
8 District of Columbia government, and as we should
9 know, when government plays a full part, because
10 since I've been on this Board every time the city
11 has helped us out, the city has control, the city
12 calls the shot. I don't care. We put up the most
13 money until the city had to use their new market
14 tax credits. We do all that, but we're behind the
15 ball.

16 So now, what should we really do? Now,
17 you can't have it both ways, because life is not
18 like that. And we're only talking about a
19 municipal corporation, which is the District of
20 Columbia.

21 We already know how many hosts that's
22 already in Ward 6. We already know how many RAB,

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1 new preserved workable houses that we have and ever
2 have, which is the only way that we're right now
3 under Obama administration came up with RAB.
4 Before there was RAB there was this, there was that,
5 and that was the other.

6 So how do a housing advocacy group work
7 out a formula or how do you save the rest of a
8 housing stock that has all lived its life cycle?
9 The only one who's free of the slave master is
10 Langston, because it's historic preserve.

11 I don't understand why the legal
12 community is not trying to get Kelly Miller to
13 reserve, because Kelly Miller public housing have
14 the same history, so that we can be moving that away
15 one way with one group of housing while we're
16 dealing with what we have here, because now what
17 I'm seeing is I'm still saying I don't see how we
18 can have it both ways.

19 I can't have 50,000 residents coming in
20 front of me like they did at 203 Greenleaf. Now,
21 you're going to tell me -- and I'm having phone
22 calls all night about you got rats, you want your

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1 building torn down, et cetera, et al. And I've
2 gone through there and seen how many residents are
3 still there in the rats.

4 So now do I supposed to let the
5 residents stay in the rat-infested building while
6 this Board figures out what to do or do I seize the
7 opportunity under this Trump administration and
8 work with whatever they have so I can get these
9 residents out, because I'm tired of hearing
10 residents telling me -- and some of them may be
11 sitting in this room because they did the same thing
12 in Barry Farms, because that's how it came down,
13 by residents coming up here talking about your bad
14 condition of your house.

15 You already know the Housing Authority
16 don't have no money. And you, yourself, how old
17 is your car? If you have an antique car, you're
18 going to keep that in the garage. And you're going
19 to only drive that at special times. Then you're
20 going to have to get a new car.

21 So what do we supposed to do, patch up
22 the houses? And you all better make sure we don't

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1 get sued if we follow your instructions. Or what
2 are we going to do when the next time one of my
3 constituents tell me that a rat done bit their
4 child, but I voted for them to stay there until we
5 work it out? What am I to do?

6 MS. HARDING: So I --

7 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: I mean
8 seriously tell me what to do.

9 MS. HARDING: I think these are really
10 important considerations for the plan. And I
11 actually want to highlight one of the things you
12 said, which you should always be very conscious of
13 whether any local money is going to come with
14 strings attached, absolutely, 100 percent, right?

15 My experience is that when local
16 government has given the Housing Authority money
17 for public housing like for public safety it didn't
18 come with strings attached. It was a recognition
19 that the federal government had underfunded public
20 housing. And it was understood that D.C. had an
21 interest in supplementing that so that operations
22 could be maintained.

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1 But it is something that in the plan
2 that I'm just asking to, this agency to create,
3 there might be tradeoffs to every choice. But I
4 don't think this Board can make an informed
5 decision about the best choice without actually
6 looking at what those, what the tradeoffs are to
7 moving to a voucher supported system, what the
8 tradeoffs are to getting public funds and having
9 plans.

10 And I've seen a little bit of a plan from
11 the Housing Authority that has estimated costs and
12 breaks it down and includes a plan for temporary
13 relocation for the residents while the repairs are
14 happening.

15 And I do think that is the type of plan
16 that we're looking to have fleshed out a little bit
17 more and with some of those conversations with
18 local decision makers about, you know, infusing
19 some funds to improve the infrastructure.

20 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Go ahead.

21 MR. GARRETT: Okay. So thank you. I
22 truly appreciate the opportunity to hear your

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1 concerns. And, Commissioners, I know we have
2 discussed it and some things I might be repeating
3 myself.

4 But I just want to just go back to the
5 public ask, realizing and recognizing that our
6 overall ask and need for viability -- and there's
7 a distinction between viability and just immediate
8 need. Viability is \$1.3 billion to increase life
9 cycle for the units. And if we continue to delay
10 that, that number increases over time from 1.3 to
11 roughly we have said within the next 5 to 10 years
12 somewhere between 1.7, if not higher.

13 Now, for one year, immediate fiscal
14 year '19, just for patch work, not viability, not
15 anything that would take us long term with the
16 units, that's \$343 million.

17 MS. HARDING: Right.

18 MR. GARRETT: If you are a good steward
19 of funding and from our position as the
20 administration, you have to look for other avenues
21 so that we're not just doing patch work, but we're
22 creating some type of sustainability within our

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1 portfolio for life expectancy for the next 15 to
2 20 years.

3 And that's one of the pieces to this
4 puzzle that we're going to be bringing to the Board,
5 because again, what we're presenting today is a
6 format for our process so that we can once again
7 bring it back to the Board and explain how we've
8 made decisions.

9 Some decisions may be made based on
10 local funding coming to us. And the statement will
11 be we don't have to seek any outside equity or any
12 other opportunities because local funding can help
13 support this particular initiative, this
14 particular complex.

15 But there may be other cases where we'll
16 have to present to not only the Board but also to
17 the public and the residents themselves of reasons
18 why a particular complex may be in need of something
19 different.

20 So, again, all we're presenting at this
21 point in time is just our format and process. Any
22 final decision that has to be made on a complex or

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1 any units that go into a repositioning mode, that's
2 going to be based on a clear dialogue and clear
3 information given to the Board of Commissioners so
4 that all their questions are answered and they feel
5 comfortable and confident that the administration
6 that they've entrusted to do their job on behalf
7 of the residents and on behalf of the mission of
8 the Housing Authority is doing just that.

9 MS. HARDING: So first I want to say
10 that's not what your resolution says. It's really
11 good to hear that. That's not what your resolution
12 says. That's not what you're actually asking them
13 to vote on. You're asking them to make a
14 determination that the most effective available
15 tool for addressing this problem is converting to
16 a voucher system.

17 MR. GARRETT: And I --

18 MS. HARDING: Hold on.

19 MR. GARRETT: And I respectfully
20 disagree with you. And the reason I do --

21 MS. HARDING: I mean, that's what the
22 words say.

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1 MR. GARRETT: Let me finish,
2 Counselor. Your interpretation, that's your
3 interpretation. But also, every effective tool
4 doesn't necessarily apply to every single complex.
5 It will be different applications to each complex
6 as we move through our analysis. So that doesn't
7 mean one size fits all. That means we're going to
8 evaluate each complex, each issue individually and
9 make a determination.

10 For instance, we could bring back to
11 this body within the next few months five different
12 approaches to five different complexes, all
13 different, some including public dollars and some
14 maybe not including public dollars. That's how
15 we're going to make our assessment.

16 So each complex is going to be unique.
17 Each decision is going to be unique.

18 MS. HARDING: And that is not what your
19 resolution says.

20 MR. GARRETT: Okay.

21 MS. HARDING: So, hearing that, I think
22 that it would be helpful to amend it to say one of

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1 the available tools, not the most effective tools
2 are converting to a voucher system, because you're
3 saying you're going to present something that has
4 a variety of possibilities.

5 And I would also caution you again
6 saying that \$1.3 billion is not feasible when I've
7 given you what is \$156 million a year for Metro
8 going to equal, when school modernization was \$3
9 billion.

10 That's significantly less than school
11 modernization. And I'm sure there were people
12 when they were looking at the crumbling public
13 schools who said what are we going to do about this.
14 There are jurisdictions that turned to privatizing
15 their public school system.

16 I am saying that should not be the
17 District of Columbia's choice. I am saying we have
18 precedent for choosing to invest in our
19 infrastructure and that we should make the policy
20 statement and decision that public housing is one
21 of the most critical parts of our city's
22 infrastructure that we have.

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1 MR. GARRETT: Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you so much,
3 Amber. This is a good note to hear from you,
4 Director Garrett, about the resolution. And
5 you've heard the -- you can go.

6 MS. HARDING: Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you. I've
8 known Amber for a while. I don't want to put her
9 on the spot.

10 But you've heard the concerns. And I'm
11 not going to try and reframe them, but
12 particularly, the concern about seeking or the
13 encouragement, not a concern, about seeking public
14 funding to help solve the problem. Amber outlined
15 some tax solutions and used some good examples with
16 Metro funding and with funding for our public
17 school system.

18 And so I just want to make sure that,
19 and I think you've said that to us in private and
20 I want to make sure you say it publicly that we are
21 not foreclosing on looking at public funding,
22 whether it's public funding at the federal level,

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1 which we know is limited and non-existent, but
2 public funding at the local level.

3 MR. GARRETT: And that's one thing I
4 was going to bring up. No, we're not
5 closed-minded. And we're looking at all our
6 options, including public money locally and public
7 money from the federal government from HUD.

8 But one thing I also want to talk about
9 and just bring out, once again, is that, yes, there
10 is declining funding from across the board for the
11 public housing program. And it's decreased over
12 time. And it will probably, based on the trend,
13 continue to decrease.

14 So, again, now we're talking about not
15 only doing infrastructure or stabilizing the
16 portfolio through an influx of capital, but we're
17 also having to figure out a way to offer actual
18 daily operational subsidy to maintain those units
19 even after any work was done.

20 If we were fortunate to have that type
21 of capital come in, where is the additional
22 operating subsidy going to come from?

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1 What we do have are options and
2 availability of tools that would increase our
3 operating money, operating subsidy on an annual
4 basis to a particular complex that would give us
5 the opportunity to continue to operate it at its
6 fullest capacity and give residents the quality of
7 life, because if we do something similar to what
8 we've done before, which is utilize public dollars,
9 put it in, but don't have the operating subsidy to
10 sustain it, we'll be back at square one within the
11 next five years.

12 It's a cycle that we want to figure out
13 a way to break. And the administration is working
14 hard to do that.

15 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: So let me ask a
16 couple questions. And we'll see if Commissioners
17 have questions. So let's just say, name a complex,
18 just a term that you use.

19 MR. GARRETT: Just say A. Don't, no,
20 just say A --

21 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Complex A?

22 MR. GARRETT: Yes.

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1 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: What I'm going to
2 call Amber's favorite complex today. That you
3 recognize, based on your assessment, that there is
4 a need for tremendous rehabilitation. What's your
5 process for vetting it with, one, the community
6 and, two, with the Board of Commissioners?

7 MR. GARRETT: Okay. Depending upon
8 which approach we would actually take, all of them
9 would require public input, especially from the
10 residents first and foremost.

11 We would go to the residents. There is
12 a series of meetings that we would have to have with
13 them, whether it be, even if it was just a
14 rehabilitation application or if it was a
15 demolition application or something that's a
16 little more extreme such as a conversion, there is
17 public input, resident input that has to be
18 maintained.

19 Now, one thing that we would do which
20 would probably be different is, and it will be
21 different, is that we would have an enormous amount
22 of meetings versus the requirement. HUD says you

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1 have to have two or three meetings. We would go
2 well beyond that, because we want everyone to be
3 on board. And we understand the significance of
4 what we're trying to do. So there would be a lot
5 of public input, also resident input primarily.

6 Then, moving to the Board of
7 Commissioners, as we've outlined, this doesn't
8 just happen in a vacuum. We have our development
9 and mod meetings on a monthly basis. We might have
10 to have special meetings in the process if we're
11 trying to make some deadlines and timeline for
12 updating our MTW plan or getting information back
13 to HUD.

14 So there may be some requests from the
15 administration that the Board meet somewhat more
16 frequently so that we can get the proper
17 information to you so there is an opportunity for
18 dialogue, questions, and a lot of discussion.

19 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: So let me ask a
20 follow-up question. So why vote on this
21 resolution today? Why not talk to every affected
22 property over the next few months? What's the

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1 haste?

2 MR. GARRETT: Well, we do have the
3 obligation that if we're going to move forward with
4 any applications based on a process that we might
5 choose or a procedure or a program through HUD such
6 as RAD or Section 18, which is a demo/dispo
7 approach, we have to have that in by June, the end
8 of June, June 30th I believe. That's the date
9 where we have to have those applications in.

10 So, if we were to choose a direction,
11 we need to have those engagement meetings with
12 residents. We need to be able to bring it back to
13 the Board to have it vetted and have it into HUD
14 no later than June 30th. That is the current date
15 that is on the table for these applications.

16 In addition, because we are an MTW
17 authority, we have the obligation to update our
18 MTW, our Moving to Work plan, no later than I
19 believe it is May 1st. So we would have to go
20 through that particular process, get that
21 information into HUD by May 1st stating that we were
22 going to take some measure and take some

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1 approaches.

2 So time for us is really condensed.
3 The staff will be working double time, if not triple
4 time, in order to try and get as much information,
5 fact finding, overlay, possible scenarios, whether
6 they be economic or from an operational standpoint,
7 financial approach and/or stabilization.

8 When I talk about stabilization, I'm
9 talking about recapitalization, any capital
10 programs that we'd have to implement, in addition
11 to what other opportunities for economic growth
12 would be there, opportunities on which we've talked
13 about a little bit. Does that give us an
14 opportunity to influx capital?

15 There's a lot of things that we're going
16 to have to do in a short period of time based on
17 deadlines that are set up by HUD.

18 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: So, Lori, Amanda,
19 Nathaniel, Courtney, Amber all said they represent
20 a diverse constituency. They would love to have
21 input in this process. What's the framework,
22 since we're using that word often today, to

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1 facilitate that input while still moving quickly?

2 MR. GARRETT: Well, we talked about it
3 in December when we had the advocates in the room,
4 about some type of subcommittee or subgroup that
5 would be able to meet and discuss some of the things
6 that we're talking about.

7 I think it would be something similar
8 to what we did when we first proposed RAD, when I
9 first came on board and we were talking about RAD.
10 And we talked about the different distinctions
11 between the RAD program and the conventional public
12 housing where we outlined and redlined documents
13 to show the distinctions and differences. It
14 probably would be something along those lines, but
15 just meeting a little more frequently.

16 Now, again, Commissioners, I have to
17 say, taking in information from individuals, we're
18 not always going to agree. What you have in the
19 house now with the agency are true, dedicated
20 professionals that are going to make, attempt to
21 make the best decision on behalf of the residents
22 and on behalf of the agency overall.

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1 So there probably would be times when
2 there would be disagreement. But what you would
3 get from the Housing Authority is the opportunity
4 for us to listen, take in information, and use that
5 information to better scope what we would bring
6 back to your attention.

7 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Great. Additional
8 questions from Commissioners?

9 MR. GARRETT: Oh, and OGC would head
10 up. I'm going to put it on Ken. OGC would head
11 up the discussions with any advocate
12 organizations. We would just increase our
13 frequency of meetings that we already have.

14 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Great.

15 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: How does,
16 how would this resolution have direct input on my
17 constituents?

18 MR. GARRETT: As of this time, we
19 haven't identified, Commissioner Vann-Ghasri, any
20 complexes or any units that we might want to
21 reposition.

22 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Well,

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1 let's act like it's a hypothetical.

2 MR. GARRETT: Hypothetical in D.C.
3 becomes gospel. And I'm worried about doing that.

4 But the reality is if we thought that
5 it was a property that we wanted to go and look at,
6 we would start engaging the residents. So we would
7 know in short time, and you would hear definitely.
8 We would engage the leadership of that complex,
9 start discussing what the options are, what we're
10 looking at, and why with a full explanation.

11 COMMISSIONER STRICKLAND: Director
12 Garrett, you mentioned incentives with this HUD
13 timeline. Can you talk more about those
14 incentives and the reason why that timeline with,
15 the end of June is so important?

16 MR. GARRETT: Well, one piece to the
17 puzzle is that they would do expedited reviews of
18 applications that we submit, meaning that it
19 usually takes anywhere from 6 to 12, if not 24
20 months sometimes, to do a review of a demolition
21 application. What HUD is saying now is that if we
22 get our applications in, if that was a route we were

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1 to take for a particular complex, HUD would
2 expedite their review for us to get us all the
3 necessary approvals so that we could move forward.

4 Also, in addition to that, with the
5 subsidy moving a program if possible if we did that
6 to the Section 9, to the Section 8 program from
7 Section 9 to Section 8, which would allow for
8 additional subsidy to the units, it would be a
9 conversion of, from ACC subsidy to what we consider
10 a HAP subsidy, housing assistance payment subsidy,
11 which is actually more money based on what we're
12 paying now for the housing choice voucher program
13 directly.

14 So, in a nutshell, doing it now while
15 the iron is hot would give us the opportunity to
16 probably receive more funding for a conversion if
17 that's something that we chose to do. We would
18 have more capital money.

19 And I think one analysis that we
20 actually did was that for one of our complexes we
21 looked at it and just doing a conversion, nothing
22 more than just a conversion into a new funding

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1 subsidy program, would allow us to have a \$4
2 million, \$4.4 million surplus.

3 And in my mind, you could take \$4.4
4 million as a surplus on an annual basis and
5 recapitalize that property without doing anything
6 substantial, just the conversion.

7 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: One more
8 question, do we really have a problem with -- I
9 recommend changing the language as Ann has
10 suggested to one of instead of the most effective.
11 Can that be --

12 MR. GARRETT: That's fine.

13 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Well, I
14 think the record needs to reflect it and it needs
15 to be moved in the right format so that we can be
16 in compliance how to change that language,
17 Counselor.

18 UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT: Ms.
19 Vann-Ghasri, will you accept it as a technical
20 amendment that we will assert post the vote?

21 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Yeah, but if you
22 could -- absolutely. But let's make sure we --

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1 MR. GARRETT: We're clear on that.

2 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: -- clear on the
3 language and I sign off on it.

4 UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT: Yes.

5 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Great.

6 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Thank you.

7 MR. GARRETT: Or to clearly say that we
8 will include options for public dollars if
9 feasible.

10 UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT: Yes, we'll
11 make both.

12 MR. GARRETT: Okay.

13 COMMISSIONER ST. JEAN: And how will
14 this impact HCVP?

15 MR. GARRETT: It would not. It would
16 not.

17 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Go ahead.

18 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Let's put
19 -- can we put on the record where do DCHA get the,
20 where do DCHA get its vouchers from, and when we're
21 dealing with RAD, where do those vouchers come
22 from, and how many different type of vouchers does

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1 the District of Columbia uses through DCHA
2 administering?

3 MR. GARRETT: I think we have the local
4 rent supplement program locally for local tenant
5 vouchers. But D.C. gets the majority of its
6 vouchers, DCHA gets, receives the majority of its
7 vouchers from the federal system, the housing
8 choice voucher program.

9 In this particular case with RAD, we
10 would be talking about tenant protection vouchers
11 that would be coming into us, or if we did a
12 conversion, there would be project based vouchers.

13 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: And would
14 you give a definition for the record what is the
15 difference between a tenant voucher and a project
16 based voucher?

17 MR. GARRETT: Okay. So the tenant
18 based voucher and the project based voucher are
19 similar. If we're just talking about the local
20 rent supplement program, that's something
21 different. That's just, that's through, funded by
22 the District government.

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1 A PBV would be funded by the federal
2 government and it would require a HAP contract, the
3 housing assistance payment contract attached to
4 that particular property. And that's how the
5 subsidy would flow into the project.

6 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you. Is there
7 anything else you would like -- any other questions
8 from any of the Commissioners?

9 COMMISSIONER NEAL JONES: I do.

10 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Yes.

11 COMMISSIONER NEAL JONES: I just
12 wanted to know if you could paint some of the
13 national context for this issue. We have talked
14 a lot about D.C. and know our own jurisdiction most
15 intimately, but if you could talk a little bit about
16 how is this issue surfacing around the country.

17 MR. GARRETT: Many housing authorities
18 across the country are starting to participate in
19 RAD. Some got out of the gate pretty late. If you
20 remember, they had to extend and increase the
21 number of units that they were allowing in the
22 program when it originally was formed by HUD

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1 because housing authorities saw it as an
2 opportunity to recapitalize their properties.

3 I know that in San Diego years ago
4 before this whole RAD program got started they did
5 do a major conversion of all of their, of the
6 majority of their portfolio to a PBV concept,
7 housing choice voucher concept. I know San
8 Francisco has just done and is in the process of
9 doing a huge RAD conversion of a majority of their
10 portfolio.

11 I also know that Philadelphia is doing
12 a conversion of some type within -- the larger
13 housing authorities are doing it. And those are
14 the ones that you hear about more than anything
15 else. But there are a lot of smaller agencies
16 throughout the nation who have done RAD
17 conversions.

18 An example of one that I worked on was
19 Freeport, Illinois where they did a RAD conversion
20 of their, of a senior building. It was an in-house
21 rehabilitation of units without having to displace
22 residents at all. But that was a way to

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1 recapitalize that particular property because the
2 dollars that were coming in from the federal
3 government were not enough to sustain it.

4 So housing authorities throughout the
5 country are doing something. I think this number,
6 I want to say over 100,000 units are being asked
7 to be reviewed by housing authorities to reposition
8 themselves for whatever reason that HUD has
9 identified.

10 We're one of the agencies that has been
11 asked to look at our portfolio also, which we were
12 going to do anyway. And I just have to make that
13 clear also.

14 Remember, we started our own
15 environmental effort and initiative over 12,
16 almost 12 months ago. So this effort was going to
17 come about whether or not we received an
18 opportunity or incentives from HUD or not. We were
19 going to be having this same discussion because we
20 were proactive in our approach, trying to get out
21 ahead of what we see as a no-win situation if we
22 don't act.

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1 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you.
2 Commissioner, any questions from you, Commissioner
3 Council? Great. So we've heard the public
4 testimony and the questions that Commissioners
5 have asked. We've been briefed on the resolution.
6 At this time, I would entertain a motion to approve
7 Resolution 19-01. Is there a motion to approve?

8 COMMISSIONER TALIAFERRO: Second the
9 motion.

10 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: No, you
11 have to go on record. I move that Resolution 19-01
12 to adopt a framework for the stabilization and
13 repositioning of DCHA portfolio of properties be
14 moved and voted into the record.

15 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Is there a second?

16 COMMISSIONER ST. JEAN: As amended,
17 right?

18 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: As amended, right.

19 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: As
20 amended. Thank you, Commissioner.

21 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: So it's seconded.

22 Can we have a roll call?

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1 MS. MCNAIR: Thank you. Commissioner
2 Neal Jones?

3 COMMISSIONER NEAL JONES: Yes.

4 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner St. Jean?

5 COMMISSIONER ST. JEAN: Yes.

6 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner Strickland?

7 COMMISSIONER STRICKLAND: Yes.

8 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner Taliaferro?

9 COMMISSIONER TALIAFERRO: Yes.

10 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner
11 Vann-Ghasri.

12 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Abstain.

13 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner Council?

14 COMMISSIONER COUNCIL: Yes.

15 MS. McNAIR: Chairman Albert?

16 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Yes.

17 MS. McNAIR: You have six yes, one
18 abstention. The resolution is approved as
19 amended.

20 MR. GARRETT: Thank you,
21 Commissioners.

22 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you very much.

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1 So I really want to thank the public, I thank
2 Commissioners also, for coming out today on short
3 notice and really just shedding light on the
4 important issues facing our residents in public
5 housing.

6 I was pleased to hear everyone
7 acknowledge that the conditions under which our
8 public residents or public housing residents are
9 living are just no longer acceptable. And that's
10 what we are trying to change here at D.C. Housing
11 Authority.

12 My commitment to you is to work with you
13 in not just the advocacy community but with the
14 residents to make sure as we look at property by
15 property that we don't foreclose on any options for
16 renovations.

17 And so we will ensure that this, this
18 Board will ensure that the staff at Housing
19 Authority is keeping the dialogue going not just
20 today but beyond today.

21 So thank you so much for coming to our
22 meeting today. Our next Board meeting is on

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1 February 13th right here at the D.C. Housing
2 Authority headquarters. And we are adjourned.
3 Thank you.

4 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
5 went off the record at 2:16 p.m.)
6