

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27, 2012

**APPROVED MINUTES OF THE
COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS HRA WORK SESSION**

**STATE OF MINNESOTA)
COUNTY OF DODGE)**

**COUNTY ADMINISTRATION OFFICE
MANTORVILLE, MN**

2012-03 Special

The Dodge County Board of Commissioners met in a work session on June 27, 2012, in the Commissioner's Room at the Courthouse Annex, Mantorville, MN, at 6:30 p.m. CDT. Don Gray, Chair called the County HRA work session to order at 6:30 p.m. CDT.

Meeting Convened

The Chair acknowledged those present and established that there was a quorum:

Those Present

Members present: Jane Olive District #1
Lyle Tjosaas District #2
David Erickson District #3
Don Gray District #4
David Hanson District #5

Members absent: None

Also present: Jim Elmquist County Administrator
Cami Reber Mantorville City Clerk
Lee Mattson Dodge Center City Administrator
Bill Ketchum Dodge Center Mayor
Don Swanson City of Mantorville Council Member
Kay Hanson West Concord City Administrator
Chris Giesen CEDA
Ron Zeigler CEDA
David Subbert Hayfield Council Member
Henry Blair Mantorville Council Member

Commissioner Gray stated he talked to representatives of Claremont and since they were not able to attend the work session, he would communicate any messages back to them in relation to this meeting.

HRA Discussion

Jim Elmquist, County Administrator provided information on what had occurred in the past regarding HRA in Dodge County and where the county was at now. It was the intention of the meeting to determine where the county and the cities go from here. Mr. Elmquist further explained that the reason for the meeting was due to a letter received from SEMMCHRA on March 21, 2012 notifying the county of a freeze of services levied against counties not participating in payment of administrative shortfall relative to Section 8 housing. After meetings with the cities in Dodge County to discuss HRA issues, the county was alerted by several cities of a desire for Dodge County to continue with SEMMCHRA's participation.

In May, 2012 a presentation was made by SEMMCHRA providing information relative to Public Housing, Section 8 Rental Assistance, Family Self Sufficiency (FSS), Low to Moderate Income (LMI) Housing, Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) Rural Development, and FEMA Disaster Relief. Issues of concern at the meetings were SEMMCHRA's discontinuance of applying vouchers to Dodge County in the future and if it included a provision of administrative HRA services to a number of cities.

HRA Discussion -
Continued

It was the determination of the County Board to meet with the cities to have a perspective as to what the county should do from here pertaining to HRA needs.

Chris Giesen and Ron Ziegler from CEDA, the Dodge County's economic development consultants, were in attendance to answer any questions regarding grant services as it pertains to EDA/HRA. Mr. Ziegler stated that they were not there to comment on SEMMCHRA services but if there were questions as to where EDA's role falls into this conversation, they would be happy to provide information. There was some question as to what services constitutes those that could be rendered by the current Dodge County EDA and the HRA services SEMMCHRA provides. The belief was that most services other than Section 8 vouchers could be provided by an EDA under the rules but questions arose as to how those services could be handled by a county funded EDA when there are cities that fund their own EDA.

The County Administrator explained that as to the Section 8 rental assistance, Dodge County has been advised by SEMMCHRA and HUD that the vouchers provided in Dodge County are not in the possession of the county but instead, SEMMCHRA. SEMMCHRA allocates the vouchers as they become available by individuals who are no longer qualifying for use. It is the understanding that there are no new vouchers being funded to HUD so if new HRA options are pursued, no new vouchers can be obtained. However, if the shortfall were paid to SEMMCHRA, Mr. Elmquist said he has seen no assurance that current vouchers will continue to be supported in the county as SEMMCHRA has control over them and Dodge County isn't aware of what's in place, where, and by whom.

The question was where to go with the vouchers:

1. Pay the allocation for Housing Services for 2012 and continue down the same path that has been done in previous years.
2. Formally request to withdraw from SEMMCHRA (as was done in the 1990's) with no assurance of it being granted but simultaneously beginning the process of setting up HRA services with another agency or on our own.
3. Take no change in action.

Commissioner Olive talked about her short time in dealing with the HRA issues and how there seems to be some transparency issues as to information being provided to the county and that is of concern to her.

Commissioner Gray agreed with this concern and said transparency should not be something a county should have to worry about when dealing with an agency supporting county services.

Commissioner Gray asked the cities to comment on what they felt their HRA needs were.

Lee Mattson from the City of Dodge Center said his primary concern is the Small Cities Development Program grant that SEMMCHRA assists with. What happens with that project? More information will be necessary.

HRA Discussion -
Continued

Cami Reber from the City of Mantorville said their primary issue is grant writing and somebody to be doing the work.

Kay Hanson from the City of West Concord said residential rehabilitation projects are a great asset to their community and the need for services such as that should continue.

David Subbert from the City of Hayfield said the primary issue is housing and voucher services. Who will provide these services if SEMMCHRA isn't there?

Administrator Elmquist said vouchers were a significant issue but relative to other programs. Mr. Elmquist asked wouldn't cities have the ability to contract with SEMMCHRA or another agency to provide grant writing and/or administration? It was the general consensus that they could.

A question was raised whether or not it was true that the federal government's participation in these programs for administration were reimbursed at a lesser amount like Mr. Wheeler stated in a previous presentation. Ron Ziegler from CEDA said it is true in his experience. An example would be relative to the floods in SE MN. The Rushford flood administration was funded at 10% and now with the last floods, 3%.

Kay Hanson asked what Dodge County was going to do if it again asks to be withdrawn from SEMMCHRA. What is the county's plan?

Commissioner Gray stated he would like to see money apportioned to its EDA consultants to provide for more of a role in filling any voids the cities see.

Commissioner Hanson agreed that he would like to see this occur as well.

Commissioner Tjosaas said he would like to see a plan put together and submitted to the Board. He just wants to see progress moving forward.

Commissioner Erickson said this item needs to be discussed further and the county needs to continue to discuss how they can meet the city needs.

Commissioner Olive said this issue is about continuing dialogue and process.

It was agreed that a work plan should be put together and presented to the Board for consideration. It was also discussed as to whether or not the county should consider talking to congressional representatives about HUD's position that vouchers are not Dodge County's but rather, SEMMCHRA's.

A question was raised as to whether or not Dodge County is willing to put some dollars forward for these services?

Commissioner Erickson stated that further discussion needs to take place. He also noted that no guarantees could be made at this point.

The County Board thanked the cities for their input.

HRA Discussion -
Continued

It was noted that the county will plan to meet again with cities to communicate what the HRA plan for the county would be.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m. CDT.

Meeting Adjourned

ATTEST:

DON GRAY
CHAIR, COUNTY BOARD

JIM ELMQUIST
CLERK

DATED: