



Reflections - Year 6

ANNUAL REPORT

Introduction

The following annual report will be categorized by department and summarize department profile updates and implementations, what remains a work-in-progress and the challenges we face for the Springfield Housing Authority since our last annual report. This report was prepared in collaboration with all SHA department Managers; I appreciate the input and all the hard work of all our employees. I hope the information in this report is helpful to the Board.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

The Executive Department Team continues to strive in providing support, structure and guidance to all SHA departments and staff. One of the main tasks on the Department’s agenda in the last 12 months has been spearheading the process of updating the ACOP and Administrative Plan. A lot of time and efforts has been invested into reviewing every chapter, updating the language, conducting research, consulting with the general counsel in order to make sure the agency will be in compliance with the new HOTMA regulations once they go into effect on January 1st, 2025. Another important process that the staff has been involved in was working with the consultants on adopting a new Affirmative Action Plan and Tenant Selection plan for it state Section 8 portfolio. The Executive Department staff has been actively working with the IT, Finance, RAO staff as well as with all the Districts, fee accountant and the consultants to address the Yardi compatibility issues. Under the Executive department’s staff’s leadership, a committee was established to review proposals for a new software. We hope that switching to a new software in late 2024-2025 will help us to overcome the major challenges that we have been facing in the last few years – it negatively affected our scores and ratings, put an extra burden on our staff, and resulted in delay in submitting our audit reports. Despite all the problems that data incompatibility has caused, the SHA has continued providing quality services to the residents and program participants.

The SHA Executive Department

- Continues to act as the center of information for policy and procedure, HUD/DHCD notifications, submission and reporting, and updating policies;
- Works with local community organizations to address housing issues and advocates for getting more resources for low-income housing;

- Works with MassHousing, EOHLC and HUD before, during and after management performance reviews and audits and develops an action plan to address identified issues;
- Continues to oversee Reasonable Accommodation requests for all SHA departments, adheres to 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, American Disability Act (ADA), Fair Housing Act and MCAD laws, regulations and guidelines. The Executive Department, reviews and oversees all Reasonable Accommodation requests submitted to SHA from residents and program participants; continues to strengthen communication between health care providers and SHA to provide a more effective collaboration in processing requests for Reasonable Accommodations. In the last 12 months, the Administrative Assistant Brittane Faraday has reviewed over 200 requests for reasonable accommodation – most of those requests are for an additional bedroom and for ADA units;
- Marieli Roman continued conducting Hearings and executing for written decisions the SHA's Rental Assistance Section 8 Program participants in fraud and non-compliance cases, Public Housing Tenant Application denials and District Add-On denials. We are currently in the process of searching for a new Hearing Officer due to Marieli's resignation.

HUMAN RESOURCE DEPARTMENT

Supervisor: HR Director Fidan Gousseynoff

In the last 12 months, there have been 40 new hires (not including employees hired through staffing agencies), 34 separations; 1 employee retired, and 14 employees received a promotion. Majority of separated employees voluntarily resigned, 10 completed vocational training or internship program and 5 were terminated for unsatisfactory attendance, performance or violating the SHA personnel policy.

The Department has filed and managed 10 Workers Compensation claims. Most of the work related injuries were due to handling sharp and heavy objects and operating tools. Most of the injured employees were able to recover and return to full duty in a short period of time. In the last 12 months, we continued our communication with the Department of Labor Standards, including providing reports to the Department about measures taken to prevent some injuries, distributing information to the employees about safety training opportunities offered by the Department, for example, how to use ladders safely or how to prevent injuries from chemicals. The SHA was selected to participate in the program that requires mandatory recording and submitting information about work-related injuries to OSHA. The HR Director attended a training to ensure all necessary information is properly documented and submitted in compliance with the reporting requirements.

One new position of the Financial Advisor was created in the Resident Services Department.

As many employers nationwide, the SHA has continued feeling the negative impact of the post-pandemic era on our recruitment, retaining and managing efforts. High employee turnover, trouble with filling vacancies and retaining workforce remain to be major challenges for the department. Most of newly hired employees in the reporting period resigned within 1-3 months. Most resigning employees disclosed that they left for a higher payrate or because their new employers provided opportunities to work remotely or have a flexible schedule.

Such a high turnover creates a lot of extra burden on the SHA staff, especially on the managers who spend a lot of time and efforts on training new hires. The most hard to fill positions were a Mechanic III and Program Specialist at the Rental Assistance Office.

As all other employers nationwide, the SHA has been having trouble not only retaining employees, but also attracting qualified candidates. We have to deal with situations like lack of communication from people applying for jobs; candidates not showing up to interviews or not responding to our invitation to an interview; candidates attending an interview but not responding to our job offer; candidates acting unprofessionally and not meeting minimum qualifications; candidates demanding to have a flexible schedule.

The HR Department has continued efforts to attract young talent, including participating at career fairs, reaching out to Career Services at local colleges; posting information about vacancies on the Handshake web-site; reviewing resumes posted by students and reaching out personally to each student or alumni who seem to be a good fit or might be interested in starting a career in public sector. We continue exploring new opportunities and using new avenues to increase outreach to the community and expand awareness about our vacancies, for example, reaching out to the Local Plumbers and Pipefitters Union and participating as a vendor at the Girls in Trade hiring event in an effort to fill the 3rd Plumber position that was open for 2 years and was finally filled.

We continued our cooperation with the Hampden County Sheriff's Department to provide opportunities to people coming out of incarceration to learn new skills and successfully reintegrate to the society. Since August of 2023, we have hired nine pre-release or day reporting individuals referred by HCSD. Three program participants hired in 2024 have been promoted to the temporary Mechanic III position and two former program participants who completed the program in 2023 became our regular employees with benefits this year. We will be working with the HCSD to explore new opportunities for their employment for out-of-custody individuals program.

After a long hiatus, the SHA resumed its cooperation with Putnam Vocational Technical Academy. Between fall of 2023 and spring of 2024, four Putnam Carpentry program students were hired as temporary maintenance staff members. Two students stayed with the SHA during the summer after their school year was over.

The SHA has continued its cooperation with Tech Foundry and provided temporary employment opportunity to two students studying IT.

In 2023, a task force consisting of foremen, trades, Executive Director Jordan, Deputy Healy, and HR Director was created to update the maintenance testing system to make it more efficient and adaptive to up-to-date demands. In 2024, the work on updating written test and practical tests assignments was completed and started being implemented.

Consistent with its EEO policy, the SHA has continued to do an extensive outreach to local community organizations, including Partners for Community Action, Springfield Department of Veterans Services, Bilingual Outreach Veterans Center, North End Citizens Council, the Urban

League, MassHire, Springfield Vietnamese American Civic Association, New England Farm Workers, and Russian Association of Western Massachusetts. The analysis of our workforce demographic data shows that as in previous years, the SHA continues to be an Equal Opportunities Employer, and the only area for improvement defined by our Affirmative Action Plan (same as in previous years) is hiring more veterans.

The HR Department has continued efforts on exploring professional development opportunities and referring employees to different trainings, seminars and workshop, for example, the Administrative Assistant was referred to the Mass NAHRO RA training; RAO Inspectors were referred to and completed the NSPIRE training, the Applications manager attended a training on State Section program with DeSilva Group. As per the foremen recommendation, a training on bloodborne pathogens was organized for all maintenance employees. In 2024, an Active Shooter training was organized for all staff members.

The HR Director has continued attending HR professional development events and participating in forums organized by the Employers Association of New England, Sullivan, Hayes and Quinn, and the Department of Labor Standards, including training on the Pregnant Workers Fairness Final Rule; DOL Overtime Rule; and Workplace Guidance to Prevent Harassment.

The HR Department is also responsible for submitting and coordinating grants for SHA, including the Digital Literacy grant from Baystate; the CDBG grant for the Duggan Youth program which was renewed in 2024, the Resident Services Coordinator grant from the State; the Housing Now Grant funded by EOHLIC. In 2024, the SHA applied for and was awarded a safety training grant from the Department of Industrial Accidents.

The goals of the Department for the upcoming year are to continue providing support to the SHA staff members and Departments, identifying new recruitment methods, increasing outreach to attract more talent, exploring and implementing new projects and initiatives and providing new training opportunities for employees.

OPERATIONS

Supervisor: Deputy Executive Director John S. Healy

This Department consist of subdivisions: Capital Improvements, Procurement, Trades and Warehouse

Capital Improvements

Capital improvement projects that the Department has been involved in in 2023-2024 include: lead based paint abatement at Duggan Park Apartments; metal deck and stair replacement at the Ashley-Gerrish and Bay-Sherman; Site Improvements at Moxon Apartments (sidewalks, handicap ramps and revamping the front of the office, removing some fencing, along with gates, exterior painting); intercom replacement/front lobby renovations at Tri-Towers; boiler replacement Project at Sullivan Apartments; installation of security cameras at Tri-Towers and Central Apartments; window replacement at Gentile Project; lead based paint abatement Project at 151 Sherman Street; painting hallways at Central Elderly; parking lots renovation and site work at Johnny Appleseed and Patrick Harrigan; window replacement project at 705-2 and 705-3 duplexes; window replacement project at 705-1; exterior, balconies, railings and trim painting and power-washing at Tri-Towers; elevators modernization some

at Riverview Apartments. On a daily basis, the Department's staff supervises projects, works closely with vendors, processes all required paperwork in compliance with ARPA, HUD (including Section 3) and EOHLA's requirements, provides support to residents and assistance to contractors. Vendors that the Department has been working with in the last 12 months include Ultimate Abatement Inc, Diversified Construction Services, JL Construction Corp., Pittsfield Pipers, Johnson Controls, Ultimate Abatement Company Inc., Peter Amorello Construction, Drizos Contracting LLC; Aegean Builders, LLC; Architectural Solutions; Inglewood development and others.

Deputy Healy has been providing support to the SHA staff before, during and after NSPIRE Inspections, assisting in the field at job meetings and overseeing work being done by outside vendors that both supports the regular SHA Operation and Capital Improvement work.

Staffing changes. The department has promoted the District E Mechanic II Matthew Rolandini and Operations Assistant Santina Chiusano to the Project Coordinator position to assist in planning, administrating, implementing and coordinating modernization and new construction programs. Works under the supervision of the Senior Project Coordinator of Facilities/Capital Improvement, but exercises considerable independent judgment.

We are proud to report that the recent HUD's compliance review graded the work of the Capital Improvements department as meeting or exceeding expectations.

Procurement Department

Highlights. The Purchasing Department continues to play an important role in key SHA projects and managing SHA properties.

Major Procurements for the reporting period include: Architectural & engineering services contract award for the Gentile Elevator Modernization Project; window replacement project at Gentile Apartments; site work project at Harrigan and Appleseed Apartments; Comprehensive Modernization Project at multiple sites; Architectural & Engineering Services Contract for Comprehensive Modernization Project; contract for On-Call Backup Mechanical Contracting Services; Heating Supplies and Electrical Supplies; negotiating a contract for the design of fire alarm upgrades for the State Public Housing 667's and 689's; plumbing and heating services.

The Department head, alongside with other SHA staff members from different departments, participated in the task group on reviewing proposals for new software.

In the last 12 months, the Procurement Department has continued working on upgrading the SHA fleet and equipment. Several contracts have been procured to purchase new golf carts, a new van and new snow machines.

Minor Procurements: The Procurement Department also plays a major role in processing requisition requests internally, received from staff, making sure all necessary paperwork is in order for the Accounting Department to properly pay the SHA's vendors.

Contract Management: The Procurement Department has taken on a more active role in managing larger service contracts that the SHA regularly uses. Examples are Backup Electrician, Backup Plumbing, Painting, masonry, etc. This is to make sure that contracts have all the necessary documentation for future audits, contract scopes are being adhered to, and to make sure that dollar thresholds are not surpassed.

Trades

The Trades Department is being used more effectively to assist the Districts with larger problems, such as apartment intercom issues, updating GFI's to meet new requirements and boiler troubleshooting.

Using the knowledge of our in-house plumbers and electricians has helped to diagnose issues and find the best course of action.

The department has added a third Plumber.

The Trades has been collaborative with the Capital department for input into capital projects involving boilers, intercoms, electrical upgrades and security cameras. This ensures that the maintenance and trades staff have a full understanding of the products that are installed during a Capital project.

The maintenance garage at Jennie Lane Apartments have been successfully managed by Jeremy Tougas who has been providing support to all SHA maintenance and trades staff, servicing and maintaining the equipment, training employees on how to properly use it and do preventative maintenance.

Warehouse

The Warehouse Coordinator Tim Boulanger continues to work with the Foremen and the Trades Department making sure that supplies are up to date and that we are prepared for all the challenges of managing over 2400 public housing units.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT

Supervisor: Stephen Ethier

Improved PIC Scores:

PIC is a system that collects, stores, and generates reports on families who participate in Public Housing or Section 8 rental subsidy programs. HUD requires a 95% submission rate.

New internal processes have been created internally by the IT Department that allow the agency to maintain close to perfect monthly scores.

	Delinquency Report	
	As of July 31 2024	
Field Office/s:	1APH:MASSACHUSETTS STATE OFFICE	Reporting Rate
MA035	Public Housing	99.76
MA035	Voucher Funded Assistance	99.92

This information is typically sent twice a month. The breakthrough is a result of showing management real time progress vs waiting for the scores to recalculate each month.

Improved Annual HQS reporting

Annual HQS inspections are a performance indicator in the Section 8 Management Assessment Program (SEMAP). A minimum of 95% units needs to be inspected and reported on.

Indicator 12: Annual HQS Inspections	As of July 31 2024
Number of Families in Current Database	Number of late inspections
2441	2%

New internal processes have also been created internally by the IT Department that allow Rental Assistance to identify and fix inspection related issues and guarantee HUD is getting up to date information. This information is typically sent twice a month.

50058 EIV Reporting

The purpose of HUD's EIV System is to provide integrated family and income data reports using a single source, via the Internet, for PHAs and HUD Field Offices to use in day-to-day operations during required annual reexaminations. IT has created a monthly process to take EIV reports and add software property and tenant data. This allows staff to quickly work through issues specific to their office. This information is sent once a month.

VMS Cleanup

The Voucher Management System (VMS) is a system used by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to monitor and manage the use of vouchers by Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) As part of our VMS Corrective Action Plan, The IT Department has created a dedicated area in Yardi where staff can efficiently perform quality control on everything and anything pertaining to VMS. This area gives staff an organized and structured way to interact with the data that is being reported to HUD.

Preparation for upcoming HUD data changes:

1. HUD is transitioning from the existing Inventory Management System/PIH Information Center (IMS/PIC) to a new system called the Housing Information Portal (HIP) that is under development.
2. The Enterprise Voucher Management System (eVMS) will improve Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program administration and modernize the process HUD uses to record monthly HCV program performance and calculate program payments.

Every effort is being made to make these two upcoming changes as easy as possible for the agency by making sure our data in HUD systems is up to date and properly classified before HUD flips the switch. This proactive approach should provide the smoothest possible transition to HIP and eVMS early next year.

Improving TRACS

The Tenant Rental Assistance Certification Systems (TRACS) dataset is an annual extract from HUD's administrative system that manages financial controls over assisted housing programs. The IT Department has begun to review how to best clean up data and streamline reporting for its four contracts to Mass Housing and HUD.

Internships

The department has hosted two internships from Tech foundry this year. Tech foundry which helps to elevate under-represented groups. Each intern learned how to research, implement and document both simple and complex solutions. We hope to provide more opportunities like this in the future.

Infrastructure & Security updates

Multifactor authentication rollout
Improved spam filtering
New Cybersecurity platform
Improved logging
Replaced switches across the agency

Computer hardware and software updates

The IT Department provides PHA specific technical assistance to 50058, 50059 and state-based programs. It also provided traditional technical support for electronic devices like computers. It provides any kind of support needed to maintain business continuity throughout the organization. Each member of the department is constantly improving their skillset in order to meet those needs. Every effort is being made to support and succeed with current and future software systems. Maintaining and improving relationships with HUD, EOHLC & Mass housing is also a major priority.

PUBLIC HOUSING PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Supervisors: Kevin Kleszczynski, Ivette Otero, Hellen Exposito, Celina Correa, Sonia Colon

In the last 12 months all five property management Districts continued working hard to provide services and support to the SHA residents. Despite the computer systems being down for 2 weeks in April, the SHA was fully operational with most recertifications and work orders being processed on a timely manner.

The staff has been working with the IT team to address compataility and reporting issues with Yardi.

In the last few months, first NSPIRE inspections have been conducted at several SHA properties, including Sullivan, Moxxon and Katherine Jones, Tri-Towers, Pine Renee, Christopher Courts and we are proud to report that most inspections received a score higher that the score received from previous REAC inspections which reflects all the efforts and time invested to bring our buildings in compliance as well as all the preventative work done by our maintenance staff on a regular basis. Maintenance crews at many developments have been busy with painting hallways and other common areas, cleaning gutters, repairing downspouts, trimming or removing old trees and bushes, repairing stair threads, repairing porches. All Districts have completed their annual inspections at most of their developments and the process of inspecting units will be completed by the end of the year.

Most Districts have reported an increase in electronic communication with residents, such as work order requests, complaints, photos of any issues etc. that the tenant may be experiencing. This is a welcomed communication channel and creates an electronic record both for the tenant and the SHA. The staff also meets with residents in person on regular basis, both in the District office and on-site at some developments for rent collection, recertification paperwork and to hear any concerns and suggestions.

District staff has been actively involved in the process of communicating with tenants, collecting required information and providing other help to the Administrative Assistant Brittane Faraday with regards to responding to increasing requests for Reasonable Accommodation.

Lease enforcement has been active. Meetings with residents are conducted regularly to reinforce regulations and compliance. When in-office agreements do not work, information gets sent to our legal team for legal action. 30-day notices and payment agreements are in motion. Open court cases matters are a combination of "cause" and "non-payment" cases.

The staff continues working diligently to reduce monthly rent delinquency, including sending out reminder notices, knocking on doors, conducting informal meetings, entering into payment agreements, referring tenants to community resources and organizations as well as to the SHA Resident Services Department while working actively with the residents on trying to change the mindset that nobody will get evicted for non-payment of rent and it will be paid by an agency through programs like RAFT.

The Districts office and maintenance staff have been doing their best to face challenges, such as illegal dumping, unauthorized occupants, other lease violations, unreported absences. Employee turnover, understaffed crews, the need for constant training of the new staff and other staffing issues continue creating extra burden on the Districts workforce and negatively affect the units turnover rates.

The Districts have been working closely with the Capital Improvements staff and contractors to assist with the implementation of capital projects.

The upcoming goals for all District are to continue efforts on improving performance, reducing unit turnover time, reducing rent delinquency, cross-training staff, getting trained on HOTMA regulations, NSPIRE and new software.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

Supervisor: Austin Harris

The Finance Department continues to support the foundation of the SHA and provides the following updates:

Staff – Staff have continued to learn new processes and have taken initiative to come up with ways to streamline procedures to make the work more efficient. With the decision to move to new software they are continuing to have ideas on what could make our procedures better on new software. Even with the issues we have had over the past year we are proud of the staff for how hard they have worked and dedication they have shown to fixing these issues.

Software – Even though we continue to deal with challenges in the software, we have mitigated many of the major issues we had when we first transferred over to Yardi. With the information that we are transferring to new software, the staff is excited to see what it can do. With the knowledge they have from the first conversion they have put together questions and knowledge that will help with the new conversion. There is overall excitement for new software within the department.

Fee Accountant – The ongoing relationship with Michael Guyder and his team at Marcum LLP has been valuable to the SHA Finance and Executive teams. Over the past year the Marcum LLP team has helped the Finance team analyze all accounts in our software, find issues with them, and helped make adjustments where needed. This has helped us stay on a great pace to fix the issues in a timely and expedient manner. They continue to help with all of the submissions to HUD and EOHLC on a regular basis. They will also be an integral part in our conversion process to our new software. They will be involved in the set up and streamline of all accounting information going into the software. We look forward to our continued work with them.

Audit and Reporting – We have been able to finish fixing our FYE2023 trial balances and have FYE2024 on track to be done by HUD and EOHLC deadlines. Currently we have our annual independent audit

planned for the end of September 2024. During this time the FYE2023 and FYE2024 audits will be completed. Then reports will be put together to submit by the required deadlines after.

Upcoming Goals –

1. Continue working towards having all HUD and EOHLC reports up to date
2. Continue cleaning up finance data to help with next conversion
3. Have clear procedures for when we convert to new software
4. Continue cross training and advancing knowledge within the department

APPLICATIONS DEPARTMENT

Supervisor: Jacqueline Banks

The Applications Manager oversees the daily operations of the Department and supervises a dedicated staff of three, Ruth Maio, Dianna Martinez, and Taisha Rodriguez. The Department is the first contact that prospective tenants have with the SHA and, as such, strives to consistently provide excellent customer service to help applicants navigate a process that can be confusing for many. In addition to processing applications for federal and state-aided public housing, the Applications Department coordinates the offer and assignment of units for applicants and for tenants being transferred within SHA housing.

The SHA maintains separate waiting list for each housing program. The state waitlist is maintained by EOHLC (Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities) through an online application called CHAMP, and the public housing federal and project-based state section 8 program waitlist is thru Yardi. Once an applicant reaches the top of the waitlist and has been determined eligible for public housing by meeting the state and/or federal income limits, have satisfactory landlord references, and pass a credit and criminal background check the SHA will make an offer of housing

Challenges: It is difficult getting eligible applicants, the majority are not passing the screening process due to prior evictions, current large rental balances and owing thousands to Eversource. The applicants that are eligible the majority already have subsidy, so they have to give their current landlord a thirty-day notice.

Goals: Continue to maintain the standard occupancy rate, improve our unit turnaround time for family housing, and to attend more training classes in order to stay up to date with new changes that affect admissions and occupancy in our state, project-based state section 8 and federal programs.

Highlights:

- Occupancy Rates/HUD. HUD has instituted financial sanctions when a public housing authority's occupancy level drop below 97%. The Applications Department has maintained an average occupancy rate of at least 97% in the federal public housing portfolio. At the end of the fiscal year (03/31/24) the SHA federal housing occupancy rate was 97%.
- Occupancy Rates/EOHLC. EOHLC has established a standard occupancy rate of 96%. The Applications Department has maintained an average occupancy rate of at least 97%; at the end of the last year's fiscal period (03/31/24), the SHA state public housing occupancy rate was 98%.

RESIDENT SERVICES

Supervisor: Pam Wells

Highlights - Some of the highlights of the Resident Services Department:

CDBG grant for Youth Programming at Duggan Apartments. SHA has continued to receive funding under this grant for the part-time youth coordinator at Duggan Apartments. We did have a new person start in this position in May of this year. Wilmarie Reyes comes to us from a background of working with youth at Girls Inc. This position engages with teens between the ages of 13-19 in activities such as career planning, financial literacy, life skills and employment. The coordinator also works with the parents of the youth to support them as their teens entered into adulthood. During the summer months, the coordinator presented a Financial Literacy summer academy. The youth were guided through a curriculum which focused on teaching participants valuable skills in positive financial planning and decision making. We are planning to concentrate on life skills for the fall session.

State grant – SHA received a continuation grant of five years from EOHLIC for a part-time resident service coordinator. The coordinator position is filled by Candra Cripps. Candra coordinates activities at Forest Park Manor and Morris Apartments. One of the partners that we worked with this year was Mercy Life. They have provided a number of activities at both Forest Park Manor and Morris Apartments. These activities keep the residents active and social. Some of the other programming has included nutrition education, financial literacy and fire safety to name a few. Candra also assists residents at these two complexes with any concerns or issues they might be having and makes appropriate referrals to address these concerns.

ROSS grant – SHA continue to provide Resident Service activities at Riverview thanks to a grant from HUD. This grant enables SHA to have a full-time resident service coordinator at Riverview. This role continues to be filled by Amy Santiago. Amy works with the residents at Riverview to meet their needs by making referrals for services, assisting residents in identifying resources for rental arrearages and identifying other opportunities to enhance the ability for the elderly to age in place. There is an active tenant council at Riverview and Amy works closely with them to bring in speakers and educational material to benefit residents. Amy also collaborates with community agencies to identify additional opportunities. Amy also put together a community health fair at Riverview with over 15 providers of services for the elderly.

Youth Programming at Robinson Garden. SHA continues to provide support to the youth at Robinson Garden via youth programming. The Youth Coordinator, Jimmy Mitchell, keeps the youth engaged by not only providing a safe space for them to meet but we also provide opportunities to discuss issues they might be struggling with. The program also brings in speakers to inspire and educate the youth about different career options.

TRS – We continue to work with the 0-4th grade population at both Sullivan and Robinson Garden in terms of literacy.

This summer, we were able to provide the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) Program at both Robinson and Sullivan again. This programming is provided by 4H from UMass. It has been very engaging for the children as they participate in stimulating hands on science activities. The 4H will be providing additional programming this Fall. There were many other programs offered at each location that included both children and parents. One of the new programs we provided at Sullivan, was in collaboration with the Springfield Symphony Orchestra. It was called the Musical Petting Zoo and it was a chance to have the youth learn about the different instruments that make up the symphony but also have a chance to actually play the different instruments. We were hoping to provide an experience for them that could open the door for future endeavors.

HUD/Book Rich Environment – SHA continue to be a part of this initiative with HUD that provides free books for distribution to our residents. This year we received 1,600 books for distribution. We have put a bookcase in the waiting room of the Section 8 department which has proved to be a big hit by

getting additional books out to our Section 8 population. The City Library is also a partner in this program and helps with the distribution. We participated with the Indian Orchard Library for the kick off of their summer reading program by giving participants access to free books. We have also share books with our partner schools and Head Start as well.

Housing First Program – The Housing First program, funded through EOHLIC, continues to work with families transitioning out of homeless shelters. There are four staff funded through this grant that provide case management services to 35 formerly homeless families as they transition to permanent housing. This program has been at SHA for over 19 years and has been successful in providing families the services they need.

Summer Lunch Program – The summer lunch program, through the Springfield Public Schools, continued at four of our family developments: Robinson, Sullivan, Reed and Duggan. This allowed families to receive free lunches for their children weekdays during the summer. This summer over 2,000 lunches were distributed.

Food Bank of Western Mass. – We continue our free twice monthly distribution of food at two sites (Moxon and Riverview.)

We also continue to have Mobile Market, which focuses on fruits and vegetables, visit 5 of our locations twice a month. Residents get additional SNAP (formerly Food Stamps) benefits on their cards for purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables at this market.

Financial Literacy Coach – This past year SHA lost our ESOL teacher who was stationed at Sullivan. SHA decided to replace that position with a financial literacy coach. Jeimer Parrilla was hired in March of this year. This position is stationed at Duggan Apartments and is responsible for working with residents who are struggling with rental arrearages. Jeimer also attends court on a weekly basis to work with residents who have entered into the court process.

Assisting Property Managers – Staff has worked with the property management team to help resolve issues with residents that are impacting their tenancy. Some of these service issues might be working with elders in referring them to services that will help them with day- to- day activities.

We continue to look for new collaborations and partnerships to provide our residents with the most up to date information on subject matters that affect their lives.

One of the new collaborations we entered into this year is with Tech Hub. Tech Hub is the digital learning component of Tech Foundry. We recently launched some computer classes at both Sullivan and Riverview. These classes are meant to improve digital literacy for elders so that they can use the tools that the internet offers and to teach basic skills at Sullivan for residents who are interested in utilizing digital literacy for work or home.

RENTAL ASSISTANCE OFFICE

Supervisor: RAO Director Blanca Berrios

Staffing: The RAO recently went through a restructuring of Staff. This included the creation of two new Senior Program Specialist positions which will assist the management team in running the office. One position was filled by an internal promotion while the other position is still seeking a qualified individual. The plan is to add two or three work stations for new hires to serve new Applicants coming into the Program. The Rental Assistance department now utilizes an internal auditor to assist with identifying deficiencies, corrective measures and provides individual or group training sessions. Turnover has been a continuing process as there are currently two vacant program specialist positions, one vacant senior program specialist position. The management is looking for hiring and expanding the team of program specialists as the voucher numbers increase.

Vouchers: The RAO staff began reviewing waitlist applicants and issuing new vouchers for our Housing Choice Voucher program June 2023 and we continue to do so. The plan is to review approximately 500 applicants for eligibility and issue vouchers to eligible participants through the end of 2023. The Department has been in the process of issuing new Alternative Housing Voucher Program, Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program, Emergency Housing Vouchers, Non-Elderly Disable Voucher and Foster Youth Initiative Vouchers over the past year. Our Foster Youth Initiative program was awarded 15 new additional vouchers this year. The Rental Assistance Program received HUD's approval for a new Request for Proposals for 36 New Construction Project Based Units. The RFP has been closed with the award issued to Clinical and Support Options.

Updates from last year's report: With a different Computer System coming on board, we should see a great improve; getting quick accurate information of RAO. I believe with the new Computer system (PHA WEB) we should be moving forward in regarding the process of becoming paperless. The staff is still working on interorganizational collaborations with DTA, SSA, DOR, DET. There has been some success with connecting our landlords with the landlord portal to review payment information. The RAO staff have been working with our accounting and IT departments to improve our reporting for VMS and PIC information to HUD.

Next Years Goals: To have a fully train staff and with the new software. Continual of training employees and cross train so they can become successful in their roles. The training is to be conducted by the managers as well as through MASS NAHRO, Section 8 Administrators Association and Nan McKay; to continue increasing new voucher allocation throughout various programs and optimize the utilization; to increase the benefits of the SHA website for both landlords and tenant interactions. The wish list includes a smart tv and/or white board for our Conference room at the RAO.

PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT

Supervisor: Michelle Ricker

Continuing to have Quality of Life Resident Meetings with each District. The next meeting will take place at Jennie Lane Apartments on September 4th. These meetings are presented by Housing Managers, Foreman, and Public Safety Staff (and sometimes the SPD) to discuss residents' concerns on the increase in criminal activities in the area.

Public Safety & Investigative Services Department Manager attends weekly C3 Community and Police Management Team Meetings across Springfield. Developing strong community networks with the Springfield Police Department, Code Enforcement, Hampden County District Attorney's Office/Community Safety Outreach, Hampden County Sherriff's Department, Massachusetts State Police, and the Chicopee Police Department.

- Starting October 3rd, SHA will start hosting the North End C3 Community Team Meetings, every Thursday at 11am, at Morgan Apartments Community Room, located at 41 Morgan Street.

New camera system has been installed at the Morgan Apartments. Providing increase security footage for both SHA and the SPD.

SHA 2024 Resident Summer Safety Rules were distributed to all SHA residents in the month of May.

55 Open Fraud Cases from year to date. These cases range from the attention of reviewed arrest logs, tows, inspections, PSO & SPD Reports, resident complaints, etc.

- Fraud Investigation works in collaboration with all 5 District Managers, including Resident Services and Applications Department.
- Year to date, 17 Boarders, found on investigative discovery, were added to the HOH's lease.

323 Tows recorded with CJs Towing Company

- Tows consisted of: Illegally parked vehicles in either resident/visitors/handicap parking; Unregistered vehicles/no plates; Expired SHA Parking Permits; Tow Zones; and illegally parked on grass.

25 No Trespass Notices have been served via hand delivered, mail, and/or certified mail.

Due to the compromise of SHA's computers, this past Spring, Public Safety's Database is currently in development with IT on a new system database. The percentage of all recorded agency resident incidents is not available at this current time.

Safety Committee Restructure Meetings will resume this Fall with new elected members.

SHA's part-time Public Safety Officer is now working full time, due to the increase in criminal activities, arrests on SHA properties, and the increase in illegal dumping.

- Since working full-time, PSO Perez has been doing agency wide walk-n-talks and engaging with residence involvement. Assisting in quality-of-life resident meetings. Meeting with Property Managers and being briefed on any new issues or concerns.

Challenges Public Safety Department is Facing

- Boarders/Unauthorized Occupants

A great number of illegal residents or boarders, are responsible for the criminal activity inside our developments. Unfortunately, it continues to be a challenge to remove boarders that are living illegally within SHA. The accessibility of falsifying forms, from leases to motor vehicles forms, etc.