

Board Approved Policy:

Board Member And Staff Relationships

Approved: September 29, 1982

PHA Board members and PHA staff have separate and clearly defined roles and functions. To ensure the effective administration of the PHA, PHA Board members and staff should recognize the separation of these respective roles.

The powers of the PHA are vested in the commissioners. The Board delegates its authority by establishing policies and procedures, and by creating staff positions to carry out the day-to-day administration of those policies and procedures. The Board hires an executive director to administer the policies and procedures it establishes and to hire and supervise the staff. The staff may recommend changes in policies and procedures but the staff can administer only that which the Board has adopted. Certain rules and regulations are established for each program by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). When the Board requests program funding, it must agree to abide by HUD's rules and regulations, generally as set forth in HUD Handbooks, as well as by HUD revisions and additions to those rules and regulations.

The PHA of the City of Saint Paul has public housing residents as well as non-residents serving as commissioners. This results in a dual role for those commissioners who are also public housing residents. On the one hand they are the Agency policy makers, and they share in the powers vested in the Agency by law and regulation. On the other hand, they are public housing residents who are obliged to abide by the dwelling lease and other Board approved policies and regulations. This can present difficulties for the resident commissioner since a distinction must be made as to whether a specific issue requires that commissioner play the role of, and be treated as a commissioner or a resident. This presents even greater concerns to staff members who recognize the resident as a Board member, with all the powers of that position, and yet must treat the resident commissioner in the same manner as all other residents in responding to concerns and in enforcing rules and regulations.

Commissioners who are residents of public housing should continue their normal relationships with their management office on all matters relating to their residency in public housing. All requests for services, complaints and inquiries regarding their rent or their leases should be directed to the appropriate field staff person.

If resident commissioners receive complaints or questions from their resident neighbors regarding occupancy questions, maintenance of the development or similar problems, the commissioners should refer these resident neighbors to the staff person responsible for management, maintenance or human services for the development. Such matters should not be referred to Central Office staff or brought up at Board meetings without making an attempt to resolve the issue or question through appropriate field staff.

If the commissioner is unable to resolve these concerns at the field staff level, it would then be appropriate for the commissioner to contact the appropriate department head (management, maintenance, development, administration or human services) to seek assistance. (This is in accordance with accepted practice for other residents of public housing who are not commissioners.)

Failing to obtain an adequate or prompt response at that level, and having subsequently raised the issue with the executive director without receiving a satisfactory response, the resident commissioner should then, and only then, bring the matter before the Board. Such matters should involve broad, PHA-wide policy questions and not items which are of concern only to a specific development or resident, unless such matters impinge directly on established policies or regulations and have not been resolved to the Board member's satisfaction at the staff levels mentioned above.

Resident commissioners who believe their individual rights, under the terms of the dwelling lease have been violated are to follow the same PHA grievance procedure as do other residents in resolving such differences.

All Board members and staff should follow certain procedures in dealing with each other. The recommended procedures are as follows:

1. Day-to-day concerns of commissioners should generally be directed to the executive director, or the deputy director if the executive director is not available. If, in the opinion of the commissioner, the matter can be best handled by direct contact with a department head or the assistant to the executive director, and if this can be done without undermining the authority or effectiveness of the executive director, then the commissioner should feel free to make the contact.

Board members should not directly contact staff persons other than those mentioned above except when seeking routine and readily available program information. The staff person shall contact the department head for direction before providing the requested information, in instances where the information is not immediately available.

2. Individual Board members should not give direct orders to any staff person. The staff cannot serve seven individual Board members "supervisors" who may each give orders which differ from that given by other Board members. Program administration and staff supervision are solely the executive director's responsibilities. The Board, as a whole, does supervise the executive director, and any directions given to the executive director should be based on a determination of the views of a majority of the Board members.
3. Any inquiry by a Board member, on behalf of an individual resident or applicant, may easily be misinterpreted by some staff people to be a request for preferential treatment of the applicant or resident. An employee, in attempting to please a Board member, may subsequently take an action which is contrary to established policy or regulations. For this reason, such inquiries on behalf of specific individuals should be directed to the executive director or to the appropriate department head.

4. Matters which a Board member elects to bring to the attention of other Board members during a Board meeting, which question program administration, must include specific information as to:

- a) When the incident occurred:
- b) Who was involved;
- c) What happened; and
- d) How it violated established policy or procedures.

In instances where an oral response by staff to complaints or questions raised by Board members cannot be provided during the Board meeting, the executive director will respond by fully investigating the matter and subsequently presenting a written Staff Report to the Board.

5. Staff (other than the executive director, department heads, assistant to the executive director and recording secretary) shall make no direct contact with Board members except at the request of the executive director or the department heads. Staff contact with resident commissioners shall be made only on matters pertaining to the commissioner's role as a public housing resident, except as otherwise directed by their department heads.
6. Staff may prepare Board Reports which recommend new policy or policy changes but establishing policies is strictly a Board function.
7. Program administration is a staff function and Board members should not become involved in the day-to-day administration of the program or in personnel matters. Such concerns on the part of Board members should be expressed to the executive director for consideration and action.