



July 9, 2007

Council Member Don Samuels, Chair
Public Safety and Regulatory Services Committee
350 South Fifth Street
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55415

Dear Council Member Samuels:

Minneapolis Public Housing Authority (MPHA) submits the following comments in response to the questions raised at the Public Safety and Regulatory Services (PS&RS) committee meeting on June 20, 2007, concerning the public housing MPD team. One of the many questions raised at the hearing by one of the committee members is what is the value of the team and what would it mean to MPHA if the Public Housing MPD team was terminated.

MPHA and the MPD have a long history of joint collaboration on preventing and rooting out crime in and around MPHA properties. Our records show detailed conversations and proposed solutions between the city leadership and MPHA regarding reducing crime in and around public housing dating back to the mid-1980's. In 1990, the city began funding a portion of MPHA's security program through the Highrise Livability and Security Program. This support, paid primarily for contract guard services for highrises, continues today from funding in part by our MPHA levy. In 1993, Cora McCorvey and then police chief John Laux, drafted the public safety demonstration program that was submitted to the City Council as part of MPHA's submittal to HUD for our first Public Housing Drug Elimination Program (PHDEP) grant. This partnership has continued since 1993, up until today despite the fact that MPHA has not received PHDEP funding since 2002.

Between 1994 and 2007, MPHA has paid over \$9,000,000 to the city for services of the MPD public housing team. In addition to these direct outlays of funds for officers' salaries, MPHA has also paid the costs for squad cars for the units, uniforms, training and all IT equipment. This partnership over the past 13 years has helped MPHA achieve buildings that are largely free of drug dealers and are safe places to live, not only for our residents but also are not a source of concern or problems to the surrounding neighborhoods. Prior to this partnership, public housing has had crime issues in and around our buildings. As a matter of fact, a 1988 MPD memo on public housing security discusses threats to police officers in and around the Glenwood Lyndale area and shots being fired at patrol cars driving through the area. The memo also discusses the difficulty MPHA staff were having in renting units and large turnover of units due to

Council Member Don Samuels
July 10, 2007
Page Two

residents' fear of crimes in our buildings. This report also shows dramatic increases in calls from public housing units steadily throughout the 1980's. The data shows that police calls from public housing highrises were 226 in 1985, 322 calls in 1986, and 371 in 1987.

The question was asked in committee what the loss of the MPD public housing team would mean for public housing and public housing residents. The number of calls to the precincts from public housing and public housing residents for service, no doubt, would increase dramatically based on our historical data. In addition, the ability of MPHA to evict drug dealers and other problem tenants will be severely challenged if this program were terminated. Drug dealers would remain in buildings longer, threatening residents and the surrounding neighborhoods. It has been our experience that even very poor and desperate tenants would move out of public housing and will not rent there, thus, vacancies will increase and our overall rental revenue will fall, further exacerbating our already severely-challenged funding levels.

Many people with mental health issues reside in our highrises. Our current team is trained to handle the many difficult situations that may arise in dealing with people with these unique challenges. In the absence of these trained officers, recent incidents such as those at 1815 Central Avenue described below may have turned out very differently:

- A resident was displaying threatening and wildly inappropriate behavior. Luckily the first responder was a member of the MPD public housing police team. As a result of trained and rational intervention, the resident was transported to the Crisis Center. This incident had the potential of being a dangerous situation for other residents and staff and required significant and skilled negotiating techniques on behalf of the MPD public housing police team.
- Management received a call that a resident had expressed suicidal intentions. 911 had responded but the resident was not at home. The MPD public housing officer was able to remain at the property with the intent to locate the person. Soon the resident was located and indeed the resident was very distraught with intentions of causing harm to himself. The officer was able to convince the person that he needed care and attention and transported the resident to HCMC. Later the resident expressed appreciation for the officer's care and attention in helping him get medical services.
- A dwelling unit had been reported that it had been taken over from a resident who had not been seen and was in the process of lease termination for drugs. Our MPD police team responded, entered the unit and ended up recovering the unit, removed and trespassed the

occupants and safely resolved what could have been a very long term drug unit within our public housing highrises.

Here are some other recent incidents from our Glendale project and some of our scattered site units and other highrises:

- Recently a visitor of a resident was overheard threatening to kill the Property Manager at our Glendale apartments. Our police soon responded with stepped-up patrol and very actively worked with neighborhood groups to identify the individual thus preventing a serious potential harm to our Property Manager.
- On another occasion, one of our Property Managers, while visiting a scattered site, was threatened with physical violence. Our MPD public housing police team was able to immediately go speak with the resident and issue a trespass notice to those that threatened the Property Manager.

MPHA manages and provides assistance, including the Section 8 program, to over 10,000 units of housing. Among this housing is over 736 scattered sites, 41 highrises in addition to over 4200 Section 8 units. There are approximately 20,000 individual residents who are living in or being assisted with MPHA funding.

As you know, many of our highrises are occupied by senior and very elderly individuals and those with disabilities. The elderly and our disabled residents are very vulnerable to criminals and criminal actions. The following are some direct quotes from some of our elderly residents concerning what the presence of the public housing police team has meant to them:

- "They deal with troublemakers better, especially with emotionally disturbed residents. They get to know who the residents are."
- "They know the procedures for dealing with street people coming into the building and residents and others who are doing drugs, prostitution, fighting and who just want to cause trouble."
- "They often know who has been trespassed from the building."
- "The MPHA police understand and are more sensitive to the diverse cultures, different ages and residents with disabilities."
- "Their presence gives elderly residents a sense of security."

As the above comments demonstrate and as the above incidents exemplify, the public housing MPD team is providing critical and vital services to very vulnerable residents. The MPHA and MPD partnership has been in place for over 13 years and has greatly reduced the level of crime within public housing buildings and, therefore, has greatly

Council Member Don Samuels
July 9, 2007
Page Four

assisted surrounding neighborhoods in reducing overall crime and increasing the appeal of their communities. MPHA over this period has invested and provided over \$9,000,000 of investments in this team and has partnered with MPD on many, many special activities and undertakings to assist the city with properties beyond public housing. Based on historical data, there is no doubt that in the absence of this team the number of calls from public housing to the precincts will increase dramatically. In addition, based on historical evidence and given the nature of the elderly and disabled residents, many of whom have mental health issues, the possibility for very tragic incidents to occur in the absence of highly trained and knowledgeable officers will be greatly increased. We strongly urge you and the rest of the City Council to continue this very valuable partnership.

Thank you for your continued support of MPHA and our MPD public housing team. If you have any further questions in this regard, please feel free to call me at 612-342-1498.

Very truly yours,

MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY



Thomas A. Streit, Deputy Executive Director

TAS:ss/2003bo

cc: Cora McCorvey
Chief Tim Dolan
Sharon Lubinski
Barbara Harris
Mary Boler