



Yolo County Housing

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BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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DATE: December 9, 2010
TO: YCH Board of Commissioners
FROM: Lisa A. Baker, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Review and Approve Proposed "Welcome Home" Customer Service Initiative and Authorize the Executive Director to Implement Task Items

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

It is recommended that the Board of Commissioners:

1. Review and approve the "welcome home" concept; and
2. Authorize the Executive Director to implement task items

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

From November 2006 through 2009, staff and the Board have worked to address organizational and fiscal needs of the Agency, culminating last year in YCH being no longer considered a "troubled agency" and with its Voucher program being certified as a federal High Performer.

In July of 2008, the YCH Board of Commissioners held a planning retreat that outlined several work areas for the Agency. The Agency has pursued each of these areas and has completed or made significant strides and YCH is once again at a place where it can consider new opportunities (see attachment for an overview of task items and progress).

Towards the end of 2009, staff was finally able to think about customer service in a broader context than just providing basic service, meeting federal requirements and stabilizing financial operations. In order to "jump start" thinking, in 2010, staff sent out customer care surveys to its three (3) main core customers (excluding institutional/governmental, vendors and internal customers): **Tenants** who rent homes through YCH, **participants** who receive a private market subsidy and **landlords** who rent to those participants. Each of these market groups had a series 7 – 8 questions. Responses to surveys varied greatly by population type. Voucher recipients, who are used to providing annual reexaminations via mail, were the highest respondents with a 21% response rate. Tenants who rent units from YCH were much lower at 8% response rate and landlords were much lower at 2% response rate. Survey participants were asked questions (see attachment for the listing of all questions and excellent to fair scores) and YCH received the following percentage scores for "excellent to good" or "excellent to fair" service on these selected questions:

Voucher Participants

- How would you rate the customer service (politeness, attitude, accessibility) of your housing specialist? **89% of respondents said excellent to good. 96% of respondents said excellent to fair.**
- How would you rate the overall services provided by YCH? **93% rated YCH excellent to good. 98% of respondents said excellent to fair.**

Real Estate Services

- How would you rate the customer service (politeness, attitude, accessibility) of your housing specialist? **63% of respondents said excellent to good. 78% of respondents said excellent to fair.**
- How would you rate the overall services provided by Yolo County Housing? **68% of respondents said excellent to good. 85% of respondents said excellent to fair.**

Landlords

- How would you rate the customer service (politeness, attitude, accessibility) of the Yolo County Housing staff? **69% of respondents said excellent to good. 81% of respondents said excellent to fair.**
- How would you rate your experience in working with Housing Choice Voucher families? **75% of respondents said excellent to good. 94% of respondents said excellent to fair.**
- Overall, how would you rate the services provided by Yolo County Housing? **69% of respondents said excellent to good. 94% of respondents said excellent to fair.**

Although there were not as many comments received as expected, nevertheless we received comments. Many of them were complimentary, but it is the negative comments that provide the greatest insight and teaching moments. Across all survey population types, there were a couple of things that were mentioned whether or not one was a landlord, tenant or participant. Comments with the highest frequency across population types include:

- Need more information about processes, services
- Need customer service to be more accessible (whether in Finance, vouchers or tenant services)
- Need less confusing and/or more timely notifications

As anticipated, expectations about rental units were highest for Real Estate Services. Despite the occasional comment for things like “swimming pools for everyone,” there were the expected issues of resident safety and security and expected behaviors by fellow residents. The most common complaints related to:

- Child supervision on the grounds and in the playgrounds (respondents cited curfews, conduct, language and youth activities)
- Cleaning up after pets
- Ensuring that fellow residents are not disruptive, especially after 11 p.m. (“making sure people are in their homes by 11 p.m.”, “not making noise at night” and “thicker walls between apartments.”)

- Keeping the grounds clean from trash
- Improved parking control
- Improved perception of security for senior residents
- Faster maintenance turnaround

So, while initial customer service satisfaction overall is high, there are places where we can improve. However, given ongoing budget constraints and the upcoming budget discussions at both the federal and state level, YCH is not in a position to improve its customer service by adding major personnel gains. What we need to do is think not only smarter, but radically differently. YCH needs to move from a reactionary institutional mindset in how it interacts with customers into a flexible information and partnership model. YCH needs to look at:

- Innovative supply chain operations for better sequencing of work;
- Maximizing use of the existing data it collects to better understand different kinds of customers and how to deliver appropriate services in a more targeted way that does not require a scattered approach so resources can be conserved and used most effectively;
- It needs to continue to build partnerships and to help its residents be part of the greater YCH community as well as of the community in general;
- Improve automated on-demand information for customer segments in order to put the power of information into their hands;
- Help customers understand what we can and cannot deliver and teach residents to work together with us to create resilient, connected and secure communities.

Like the radical energy makeover currently underway, YCH needs a radical information makeover to deliver services consistent with its mission statement. Some initiatives are already in progress, some are future task items. What follows is a set of tasks and programs that, collectively, we have entitled “Welcome Home” to highlight that we provide, not just an affordable place to live or that we are a government entity, but that we provide homes for residents and communities of neighbors.

ELEMENTS OF “WELCOME HOME”

The Welcome Home initiative can be broken down into several major categories. This report outlines each one and proposed initiatives that are already in progress or that need to be implemented. Where additional policy and approval direction is needed, those areas are called out.

1. Improved information delivery. Information on Demand. Better use of Existing Data

In the information age, information is power. And not just having data, but being able to understand the data, extract meaning from data and use data to constantly reengineer how services are delivered and to meet the changing needs of customers.

Currently, YCH has moved to on-line application-taking for open wait lists in multiple languages, annual customer care surveys of key population stakeholders, and is migrating administrative functions into more flexible “software as a service” cloud computing models.

In addition, YCH is deploying Landlord Access, a Tenmast module that will allow secure on-line internet account management for landlords and has already implemented direct deposit for landlords as an option.

YCH is also deploying TenDocs, an integrated document imaging storage and retrieval system that will allow YCH to move from a primarily paper-driven organization to an electronic work space with paper backup. This will streamline work functions and reduce lost paperwork, saving time, paper, and toner.

YCH is currently setting up the Housing Intelligence Portal (HIP), which provides real time tracking of performance indicators in key areas. Managers and staff will have instant access to current data in our integrated software system on performance in SEMAP, PHAS, leasing, unit turnaround, cash flow, etc. allowing quicker and better on the ground decision-making.

What do we still need to do?

- Fully integrated and updated web portal for customers. Both internal and external;
- Consider **use of social networking** such as Twitter or Smartphone apps (or the next generation technology) to allow call in of trash, maintenance or other issues;
- Better use of aggregated client data to understand the different needs of different populations;
- Implement **customer management phone system** that allows applicants to track their wait list status and clients to get account information over the phone.
- **Implement web-based notification system** (similar to that used by U.C. Davis) for real time notification in preferred formats for YCH information – eliminates the need for postage and mailing as well as the delay that goes with it to reach our large and far-flung community. Will also serve our population and special needs populations with emergency notifications in multiple languages.
- Move direct deposit from an opt-in approach to an automatic sign up process

II. Improved access to services, recreation and community

YCH currently has over 45 partner service agreements in place to assist client families. It puts out an annual calendar that calls attention to YCH and other community services. In addition, it has a youth soccer league, the TANA Art Center, two 4-H Clubs, a Narcotics Anonymous Chapter, on-site Senior Center activities and meals program. YCH sponsors Resident Councils, on-site computer labs and has a Resident Advisory Board. YCH has requirements for Tenant Commissioners to sit on its Board of Commissioners. YCH sponsors on-site preschool and after-school activities. There is a Client Services Coordinator for service referrals and for Family Self-Sufficiency programs. Despite that, many residents don't participate, have complaints about children who are not supervised or don't know where to turn for services when they need them.

YCH can do a better job of this by using the power of its website, Facebook site and future notification systems. It can also do a better job by **creating a "Welcome Home" packet** that, instead of starting by outlining all the "don'ts", starts with explaining who we are, what services and opportunities are available both within YCH and in the greater community and outlines ways in which residents and voucher participants can be involved in making a better

community. There are still “don’ts” and YCH will enforce those requirements, but residents should feel at home, not in an institutional setting.

In addition, residents collectively represent a large group with buying power. YCH should outreach the local Chambers of Commerce of which we are already members to see about creating a **“Welcome Home” coupon pack for local businesses as a way to introduce residents to their community**, to local businesses, and help them get a head start on making their new home a home.

In addition, YCH will continue to seek ways to improve the provision of youth, family and senior services. **YCH will look at ways in which to expand its 4-H Clubs from two (Winters and Madison) to cover Woodland and West Sacramento as well.**

III. Improved sense of security for residents and improved emergency readiness

For residents who rent from YCH, there are concerns at times with safety and security. YCH has periodically surveyed local police and sheriffs, in accordance with information sharing memoranda, to determine if there are serious safety concerns and police activity. YCH properties, in those surveys, routinely have some of the lowest calls for service in a multi-family housing setting.

Despite this, we can do better and we can help residents feel more in control of their sense of safety. With that in mind, staff proposes that YCH develop a **resident security patrol program**. This program will have several purposes:

- Give interested residents a chance to be part of the solution for improved safety and security;
- Provide a way for residents to interact with and participate in local Neighborhood Watch programs;
- Give civilian first aid, emergency and evacuation training to create a corps of residents to assist in times of emergency.

Staff proposes to outline this plan and bring it back to the board in early 2011 for implementation. Some elements will also be outlined in the draft Emergency Plan that will come before the Board in the near future.

IV. Better education and employment opportunities

The current economic downturn has hit our families, who were already vulnerable. While the majority of residents in our programs who are not children, elderly or disabled are in the workforce, continued poor employment opportunities make it more difficult for them to be successful. In addition, the nature of jobs in America is changing – in agriculture, energy and every facet of life. For our families to continue to be a valuable and useful labor force, residents and participants need to learn new skills. In a separate staff report, YCH is asking the Board to approve an application for a training and education center for jobs. YCH is also looking at ways to link its energy efforts in the new economy to jobs for residents within that economy. As opportunities become available, staff proposes to bring to the Board the opportunities to continue to help its workforce be valuable, available and trained for those jobs. YCH will continue to serve on the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and seek ways to make job training and employment opportunities available and relevant to youth and adults.

In addition, staff proposes to create a **youth “Energy Corps”** with training provided by PGE to assist in learning about and in helping ensure that the ongoing future energy improvements in the planned Energy Performance Contract perform to standard. This will involve training and an opportunity for youth to work with YCH staff, Energy Services company personnel, PGE and others on continued implementation and performance of energy improvements. It will also help ensure that the value of those improvements remains in place and that YCH and its energy partner will receive the guaranteed future energy savings that will make its annual debt service payments on the Energy Performance Contract (EPC). All while helping youth understand today’s changing energy economy and market and gaining skills that can help them with future employment opportunities. This training is modeled on existing training currently provided to youth within a school setting, with the difference being the ability to actually work with the landlord (YCH) and collect useable data on effectiveness by deploying it within our residential community setting.

V. Re-branding

YCH has done a good job of re-branding its core organization and ensuring that it is a known quantity with a proven track record and a local government entity over the last 60 years. Now, YCH needs to take the next step and re-brand its customer service. “Welcome Home” is meant to start that re-branding. To do that, staff proposes to design not only the welcome packet outlined above, but also **a customer service logo that epitomizes the sense of “Welcome Home.”** This logo can be used on everything from parking permits to welcome packages to coupon packages and to its youth, computer and social activities. It should be designed to promote a sense of community and not a sense of institutionalization. Staff will bring back a future concept on the branding package and where it can be used.

FISCAL IMPACT

There are no fiscal impacts at this time. Follow up actions may have financial implications that are currently unknown.

CONCLUSION

Staff believes that it can save money through better initiatives, build better partnerships, improve the current and future lives of its residents and participants and continue to help position its housing stock to be not only viable today, but also tomorrow through implementation of these cost effective strategies. Staff recommends approval of the “Welcome Home” customer service initiative.

Attachments: Overview of Task Items and Progress
Summary of Customer Care Responses

OVERVIEW – UPDATE TO TASK ITEMS FROM 2008 BOARD RETREAT

What follows is a brief recap of main work areas, progress from the 2008 Board Retreat.

Planning Retreat 2008 – Issues and Progress

Disaster Planning and Continued Operations Policies

With regard to property we own and operate that receives federal assistance, Federal Section 504 requirements, which govern ADA accessibility compliance in housing and programs require that every Housing Authority should have an emergency evacuation plan for each of its buildings and for each special needs resident. In the preparation and updating of this plan, the Housing Authority should inform special needs residents that with the resident's consent, they will provide information to the fire department, or appropriate organizations which identify residents with special needs in case of an emergency evacuation. Applicants should be given the opportunity to decide whether they want the recipient to provide this information to the fire department. The Housing Authority may share this information with the local fire and police departments provided consent is given.

In addition, under the California Emergency Services Act, a “political subdivision” includes any city, city and county, county, district, or other local governmental agency or public agency authorized by law. Cal. Gov. Code § 85557(c). “Governing body” means the legislative body, trustees, or directors of a political subdivision. Cal. Gov. Code §85557(d). As such, YCH falls within the definition of political subdivision since it is a public body corporate and politic which can exercise public and essential governmental functions and has all the necessary powers to carry out the purposes and provisions of the Housing Authorities Law. Cal. Health and Safety Code Section §34310. YCH is not a district; rather it is a “local governmental agency” or “public agency authorized by law.”

In 2008, YCH did not have a Disaster Plan, a Continued Operations Plan or an Emergency Evacuation Plan for special needs residents. In 2010, YCH has a draft Emergency Disaster Plan and a draft Continued Operations Plan and recently certified staff in Emergency Planning for Special Needs Populations . Also since 2008, YCH has become active in Operational Area for emergency response and participated in the 2010 local emergency exercise with other jurisdictions.

YCH and Climate Change Issues - Greening Housing, Energy Planning

On April 17, 2008, the Board approved a Resolution joining the Climate Change Compact and became one of the local governments in Yolo County dedicated to reducing its carbon footprint. Since that time, YCH has completed a Major Flows Analysis for a documented carbon footprint, become a member of the Climate Registry and, in 2010, adopted its Energy Plan for reduced greenhouse gas emissions and improved performance. Also in 2010, YCH replaced over 1,780 windows to improve comfort and energy performance for residents and is replacing over ½ of the refrigerators in its portfolio, along with HVAC

systems in select areas. YCH is participating with the newly formed Yolo Energy Watch and the stimulus weatherization program to make additional no cost or low cost energy improvements to its portfolio. In 2010, YCH signed a three-county MOU for an Energy Performance Contract and is currently soliciting consultants to serve as the Energy Performance Contract Consulting agent for the proposed energy contract.

Strategic Planning for Current and Future Development/Redevelopment of existing owned units

In the 2005-2010 Agency Plan, the YCH indicated that it would embark on an aggressive program to acquire and develop properties, do more commercial projects and undertake demolition and disposition of aging public housing sites. Since the time of the adoption of the original plan, the Agency has moved away from aggressive commercial ventures and demolition of public housing.

Since 2008, the Agency has completed a Capital Fund Financing Plan for approximately 23 years of debt service payments from the Capital Fund to help make debt service on the main Administrative building. In addition, it has completed two (2) single-family acquisition/rehabilitation projects for transitional housing for full service mental health clients, completed a major drainage project and façade renovation at Riverbend I and II, installed backup generators at its Winters water plant and negotiated a shared services agreement with the City of Winters for YCH sewage operations. It is currently working on an acquisition/rehabilitation project in Woodland, another one in Davis and in finding predevelopment funds for a master planned community in Yolano-Donnelly and the development of the 6 Esparto townhome lots, as well as the reuse or sale of the single-family lot in Davis.

Need for, and Development of, Comprehensive Strategic Housing Plan for our area

Since 2008, YCH has provided technical assistance for the various Housing Elements for each of the jurisdictions, now sits on the Executive Commission to End Homelessness, provides technical assistance to the City of Winters Housing Advisory Committee and works with the housing and community development staff in each of the jurisdictions in Yolo County. YCH has remained committed to a wider vision, but has waited until it finalizes changes in governance structure and conversations about shared service concepts before moving forward on a comprehensive housing plan.

Tenant Commissioners, Development of standardized set of terms and application processes

On November 14, 2006, the Board appointed current tenant commissioners. The initial terms were for two (2) years, which are expected to end in November 2008. Since that time, YCH has standardized the terms and application processes for tenant commissioners.

Interim Board and Transition Plan to Permanent Board

In June 2006, the Board of Supervisors (BOS) appointed themselves as the Interim Board for the YCH. This Interim Board has served from 2006 until the current time. In 2008, the Board embarked on a process to move towards changing governance to a new model. That model is now moving forward and should be considered by the Board of Supervisors in January of 2011.

CUSTOMER CARE RESULTS – November 25, 2010 – Total Responses 267

Zip Code(s) of Responses:

95695	95605	95776	95691	95618	95616	Miscellaneous
82	87	10	46	16	10	10

1. How would you rate the customer service (politeness, attitude, accessibility) of your housing specialist?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
132	102	19	7	4

2. How would you rate the customer service of the housing inspection staff?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
157	83	10	4	1

3. Tell us how you feel problems are handled and solved by your housing assistance program staff?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	No Answer
106	114	15	3	5	22

4. How would you rate your experience with the process for annual re-certifications?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
127	106	17	6	5

5. How would you rate your landlord/tenant relationship?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
135	99	16	4	6

6. How would you rate the customer service you receive when you visit or call the main office located in Woodland?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
136	100	17	2	5

7. How would you rate the overall services provided by Yolo County Housing?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
146	99	13	3	2

8. How would you like to hear from us?

Email: 8 responses

Text: 12 responses

Regular Mail 235 responses

:

CUSTOMER CARE RESULTS – AUGUST 26, 2010 – Total Responses 41

Zip Code(s) of Properties:

95695	95605	95776	95694	95770	None Listed
0	24	9	5	1	2

1. How would you rate the customer service (politeness, attitude, accessibility) of the Yolo County Housing staff?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	N/A
13	13	6	3	6	

2. How are problems handled and solved (such as neighbor issues) by your housing specialist and/or management?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	N/A
9	11	4	5	3	9

3. How do you feel about the customer service of the maintenance staff?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	N/A
20	15	4	1	1	

4. How was the quality of maintenance repairs completed in your home?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	N/A
22	13	2	3		1

5. How do you feel about the length of time it took to complete your maintenance work order?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	No Answer/NA
9	13	14	3	2	

6. Please tell us about the customer service you receive when you visit or call the main office located in Woodland. Was it:

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	N/A
11	17	5	3	2	

7. Rate the overall services provided by Yolo County Housing?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	N/A
14	14	7	3	3	

Like to hear from us?

31 prefer regular mail

CUSTOMER CARE RESULTS – JULY 2010 – Total Responses 16

Zip Code(s) of Properties:

95695	95605	95618	95691	95616	None Listed
2	3	3	5	1	2

1. How would you rate the customer service (politeness, attitude, accessibility) of the Yolo County Housing staff?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	N/A
6	5	2	3		

2. How would you rate your experience in working with Housing Choice Voucher families?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	N/A
6	6	3	1		

3. How would you rate how problems are handled and solved by your housing assistance program staff?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	N/A
6	4	5	1		

4. How would you rate your experience with the housing assistance payment process (accuracy and timeliness of payments; direct deposit)?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	N/A
9	4	1	2		

Do you use direct deposit?

Yes	No
6	9

5. How would you rate the referral process for rental properties listed with YCH?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	No Answer/NA
2	4				8

6. How would you rate the customer service you receive when you visit or call the main office located in Woodland?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	N/A
8	4	1	3		

7. Overall, how would you rate the services provided by Yolo County Housing?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	N/A
6	5	4	1		

8. Like to hear from us?

Email: 5

Text: 1

Regular Mail – 6 prefer regular mail