

**Testimony of Tim Sullivan
Chief of Staff, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development**

**Before the New York City Council
Committee on Public Housing**

September 30, 2013

Good afternoon Chairwoman Mendez and members of the Public Housing Committee. My name is Tim Sullivan, and I am the Chief of Staff to Deputy Mayor for Economic Development Robert K. Steel. On behalf of the Bloomberg Administration and Deputy Mayor Steel, thank you for the opportunity to testify this afternoon about the recently-enacted state legislation that transformed the governance and board structure of the New York City Housing Authority. The Bloomberg Administration believes that these reforms will set NYCHA on a better path for decades to come and enable NYCHA to better pursue its mission of providing homes for more than half a million New Yorkers despite continual dramatic cuts in federal funding.

I would like to begin my testimony this afternoon by thanking on behalf of the Administration Speaker Sheldon Silver, Assembly Housing Committee Chairman Keith Wright, and State Senator Martin Golden for their leadership in passing this bill, as well as Governor Cuomo and his Administration for their support of the legislation. The Administration is also appreciative of U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan's support during this process, including a letter of support sent to the Governor and the leadership of both chambers in the State legislature.

This afternoon, I would like to take the opportunity to describe for the Committee why the Administration sought to change NYCHA's board structure, outline the details of the final legislation and provide an overview of the newly-appointed members of the NYCHA board.

I will begin by describing why we believe reform legislation was necessary.

The challenges facing public housing nationwide are well-known to this Committee; for decades, Congress has been steadily and dramatically reducing federal support for Public Housing Authorities. In the last 12 years alone, NYCHA has seen its annual federal capital support reduced by nearly 50%, despite escalating needs for capital improvements to a public housing stock that is in many cases now more than 80 years old. Sequestration has only exacerbated these challenges.

Unlike other cities such as Chicago, New Orleans and Atlanta, which have torn down tens of thousands of units of public housing in recent years, Mayor Bloomberg has refused to abandon public housing in New York City, despite this fiscal crisis. But the Mayor has also recognized that NYCHA needs to adjust to this "new normal" of diminished federal support for public housing.

And so in 2011 and 2012, at the Mayor's direction the City and NYCHA, under the leadership of Chairman John Rhea, undertook a comprehensive review of NYCHA's governance structure, operations and financial outlook. This review resulted in a series of critical initiatives, including the recently-announced \$732 million Bond B financing transaction that will fund capital repairs at 24 NYCHA developments in all five boroughs, a plan to reduce NYCHA's Central Office costs, and NYCHA's ongoing efforts to eliminate its maintenance and repairs backlog by the end of 2013.

One of the key areas on which this review focused was NYCHA's board, which prior to the 2013 legislation was comprised of three full-time, salaried members and one resident member paid on a per-diem basis.

The review of NYCHA's governance structure revealed that NYCHA's board was an outlier from nearly all of its Public Housing Authority peers as well as from best-in-class non-profit and corporate boards of directors.

Non-profit and corporate boards of directors are often described as having four key responsibilities:

1. Setting overall organizational strategy
2. Hiring and evaluating senior management
3. Overseeing implementation of strategy
4. Consulting on key issues and challenges as they arise

In these best-in-class organizations, there is a clear distinction between oversight and management.

Prior to the passage of this legislation, NYCHA was the only public housing authority in New York State – and one of only a handful of PHAs in the entire country – with a full-time, salaried board of directors. As Secretary Donovan said in his letter of support, “[t]his structure presents a number of challenges to maintaining the proper fiduciary duty to the residents and the community. In particular, it places board members in the untenable position of having both oversight and management responsibilities.”

NYCHA's board was also substantially smaller than many other large-city PHA boards, which limited the number and diversity of perspectives represented on it. Chicago has 10 members; Philadelphia has nine; Newark, Atlanta, and San Antonio have seven. In fact, of all the large PHAs we reviewed, NYCHA had the smallest board of any PHA.

Finally, NYCHA's board also did not have the kind of resident representation that other PHAs had adopted. While a resident member – Victor Gonzalez – had been added in 2011, NYCHA still had fewer resident members than many of its peers. Philadelphia, San Antonio and Los Angeles have two resident members; Chicago has three.

In August 2012, Mayor Bloomberg announced that the City would seek State legislation to reform NYCHA's board structure to bring it more in line with other large PHAs and adopt governance best practices.

The Administration's approach was driven by three primary goals in seeking a transformation of NYCHA's board:

1. Creating a clear division of responsibilities between the NYCHA board and NYCHA management
2. Expanding the overall size of the board
3. Expanding the number of resident members of the board

In February 2013, a bill was introduced in the State Senate by Senator Golden which embodied these principles. Through the winter and spring of 2013, the Administration worked closely not only with Senator Golden, Assemblyman Wright and Speaker Silver but also with community groups, public housing advocates and local elected officials to refine and improve the bill. The Mayor's Office convened a formal meeting at City Hall with the New York City Alliance to Preserve Public Housing in April 2013; many of the Alliance's suggested amendments to the bill were ultimately incorporated in the final legislation, changes we believe made the bill even stronger.

In June, large bi-partisan majorities in both the Assembly and Senate passed the bill, and on July 3, 2013 Governor Cuomo signed the bill into law.

The new NYCHA board consists of seven members appointed by the Mayor, including a full-time Chair. Of the six remaining seats on the board, three must be filled by NYCHA residents, and all members except the Chair will receive a monthly stipend of \$250 for every four hours of work, capped at \$1,500 per month.

The members other than the Chair serve three-year terms, but the law creates a staggered board structure so that new appointments are made every year by the Mayor. To accomplish this, initial members of the new board are appointed for fixed terms of one, two or three years. After the initial terms, all appointees will serve three years.

Following the enactment of the legislation in July, NYCHA launched a comprehensive outreach process to let residents know that they could apply to serve on the new board. On June 25th, a letter from Mayor Bloomberg was mailed to each household in all 334 NYCHA developments announcing the application process. Flyers were posted in English, Spanish, Chinese and Russian in all NYCHA developments, as well as in Community Centers throughout the City. Applications were available online, in NYCHA Property Management offices and in NYCHA Community Centers.

The resident application period was open until August 2nd. 592 resident applications were received.

Last week, Mayor Bloomberg announced the appointment of six members of the new NYCHA board, joining John Rhea, who will remain in his role as NYCHA Chairman. This new board includes individuals with significant experience in housing, finance, community development, real estate development, economic development, education and resident leadership.

We believe that these seven individuals bring an outstanding collection of perspectives, experiences and backgrounds to the NYCHA board, and I am pleased to share with the Committee a brief description of each new member.

Diahann Billings-Burford serves as the nation's first-ever municipal Chief Service Officer, charged with leading NYC Service – New York City's initiative to promote a new era of service and volunteerism in New York City. Prior to her appointment, Ms. Billings-Burford served as Deputy Executive Director of External Affairs for City Year New York. Prior to joining City Year, she served as the New York Director of External Affairs for Achievement First, a charter school management organization. Ms. Billings-Burford spent most of her career with Prep for Prep, a New York based leadership development organization where she served in various capacities, including Director of College Guidance and Director of Leadership Development Opportunities. A graduate of Yale University, she also holds a J.D. from Columbia University School of Law.

Beatrice Byrd is the former President of the Red Hook West Resident Association. Previously, Ms. Byrd served in various capacities within the former New York City Board of Education, including as an 8th grade English and Social Studies teacher; an Assistant Principal; and a Neighborhood Literacy Coordinator for Community School District 15. She has attended various institutions of higher learning – Hunter College, New York University, Cornell University, and Columbia's Teachers College, where she pursued a doctoral degree in History and Philosophy of Education.

Victor A. González was the first public housing resident to be named a member of the Board of the New York City Housing Authority. Mr. González, who has lived in NYCHA housing for 50 years, currently resides in the Rabbi Stephen Wise Towers on Manhattan's Upper West Side. He is a tireless public housing resident leader and advocate, and has served as president of the Wise Towers Residents Association since 2003 and as alternative member of NYCHA's Resident Advisory Board. Mr. González also has done extensive work with advocacy groups, organizing workshop meetings for tenants and supporting activities that impact not only his development, but also the community around him. Born in New York City to Puerto Rican parents, Mr. González received his Bachelor's degree from Mercy College and served for five years in the U.S. Air Force, honorably discharged after reaching the rank of Sergeant of Security Police.

Following his military service, he spent 33 years working for UPS, retiring as international Team Leader in Customer Service in 2005.

Kyle Kimball is the President of the New York City Economic Development Corporation. Since joining NYCEDC in 2008, Mr. Kimball has helped to develop and implement NYCEDC's strategy to strengthen the City's economy. NYCEDC's economic transformation agenda includes an aggressive slate of programs aimed at helping legacy industries transition to 21st Century business models, attracting promising new industries, and expanding entrepreneurship to ensure that the City is well positioned to thrive in the dynamic 21st Century economy. Beyond working to overhaul and grow the City's economy, Mr. Kimball's efforts have also included overseeing billions of dollars in capital investments ranging from basic infrastructure improvements to new parks and streetscapes across the City, as well as implementing several of the Administration's most ambitious area-wide redevelopment projects, bringing new housing, infrastructure, and job opportunities to neighborhoods throughout the five boroughs. Prior to joining NYCEDC, Mr. Kimball worked at Goldman, Sachs & Co. as a Vice President and at J.P. Morgan, also as a Vice President. Mr. Kimball is a graduate of Harvard College, where he majored in Government. He received his Master's degree in Public Policy from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

Willie Mae Lewis is the former President of the St. Nicholas Houses Resident Association. After her early involvement in the lunch-counter demonstrations of the Civil Rights era, Ms. Lewis came to New York and became deeply involved in her community. She has worked for the Department of Education since 1989, currently at P.S. 197, just a few blocks from her home. Ms. Lewis is also a deeply involved supporter of the new Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy Charter School at St. Nicholas Houses, where she serves as a member of the board of directors. She completed her education at the College of New Rochelle.

Emily A. Youssouf is a veteran in the fields of finance and housing, with an extensive background of more than 30 years of leadership positions and strong results in the private and public sectors. Ms. Youssouf is currently a Clinical Professor at NYU's Schack Institute of Real Estate, a master's program in real estate where she teaches courses in Real Estate Capital Markets, Affordable Housing Finance and is the curriculum coordinator for the finance track. Previously she was a Managing Director at JP Morgan Securities where she was head of the Housing Finance Department. Prior to her time at JP Morgan, Ms. Youssouf was President of the New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC). Under her direction, HDC became the largest issuer of multi-family affordable housing bonds in the country for 2004 through 2007. Ms. Youssouf is a graduate of Wagner College with Honors, and holds an MA in Urban Policy Analysis and Management from The New School for Management and Urban Policy.

In conclusion, the Bloomberg Administration believes that this new NYCHA board structure will help put NYCHA on a more sustainable path for decades to come as it continues to grapple with federal de-funding. By streamlining decision-making and creating a clearer division of responsibilities between the NYCHA board and NYCHA management, this new structure will

result in enhanced operations and improvements to resident quality of life for the more than half a million New Yorkers who make their homes in NYCHA communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be glad to answer any questions from the Committee.

FOR THE RECORD



Legal
Services NYC

TESTIMONY OF LEGAL SERVICES NYC REGARDING NYCHA'S NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**New York City Council
Committee on Public Housing
September 30, 2013**

Legal Services NYC welcomes the opportunity to give testimony before the New York City Committee on Public Housing. We regret that due to scheduling conflicts we cannot present our testimony in person.

Legal Services NYC is one of the largest law firms for low income people in New York City. With 18 community-based offices and numerous outreach sites located throughout each of the city's five boroughs, Legal Services NYC's mission is to provide expert legal assistance that improves the lives and communities of low income New Yorkers. Legal Services NYC annually provides legal assistance to thousands of low income clients throughout New York City. Historically, Legal Services NYC's priority areas have included housing, government benefits and family law; in recent years, Legal Services NYC has vastly expanded services in areas of need critical to our client base, including consumer issues and foreclosure prevention, unemployment, language access, disability, education, immigration, and bankruptcy.

We look forward to the opportunity to work together with the newly reconstituted NYCHA Board to address the many urgent issues confronting our clients who reside in public housing. We hope that the Board will take the opportunity to take a fresh look at longstanding problems that have long defied solutions, and to re-examine policies and procedures that may be detrimental to the welfare of its tenants.

In particular, we urge the new NYCHA Board to address on a priority basis the following issues that affect large numbers of NYCHA tenants:

1. Unnecessary Chronic Rent Delinquency proceedings. Each year, NYCHA commences thousands of tenancy termination proceedings based on "Chronic Rent Delinquency." While some small number of tenants may actually be "delinquent" in the sense of willfully neglecting their obligation to pay rent, the vast majority of CRD tenants are simply being penalized for being poor. Tenants most in danger of termination for CRD are low income workers who face periodic layoffs and reductions in hours, and public assistance recipients who must contend with

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innumerable case closings and benefit reductions. Placing such tenants at risk of homelessness serves no purpose. The Board should examine ways to reduce the number of CRD proceedings by providing NYCHA tenants with help in coping with financial distress rather than punishing them for economic circumstances beyond their control.

2. Delays in rent adjustments. NYCHA tenants often confront recalcitrance and delay when seeking to reduce their rent shares after a loss of income. As a result, tenants find themselves unable to pay rents that are based on outdated income figures, and are threatened with unnecessary CRD proceedings and the risk of actual homelessness.
3. Unduly harsh penalties for minor criminal offenses. Although NYCHA must of course take action to discourage criminal activity in its projects, NYCHA policies unnecessarily expose vulnerable individuals to homelessness and needlessly break up family units. As the courts move toward treatment and rehabilitation of drug offenders aimed at reintegrating them into their communities, it makes little sense for NYCHA to reflexively banish offenders from their neighborhoods and separate them from their families. Similarly, threatening elderly parents and grandparents with eviction based on the actions of family members, rather than offering them supportive services, aggravates the City's homeless crisis without ameliorating conditions in public housing.
4. Failure to accommodate the disabled. Although court decrees obligate NYCHA to seek assistance for disabled tenants facing administrative or judicial eviction proceedings, NYCHA too often still neglects this duty, placing such tenants in danger of homelessness. NYCHA regularly terminates rent subsidies for tenants in their 80s or 90s without inquiring whether they might have a disability that prevented their compliance with Section 8 rules. NYCHA frequently commences nonpayment and holdover proceedings against mentally impaired tenants without informing the court of their need for a guardian.
5. Uninhabitable conditions. NYCHA has made progress in reducing the number of outstanding "work tickets," but much more needs to be done to address longstanding repair issues and to reduce the wait time for urgent repair requests.
6. Failure to assist domestic violence victims. Although victims of domestic violence are entitled to an application priority to enable them to escape their abusers, DV victims regularly encounter bureaucratic delay that leaves them waiting for years while they and their children remain in danger.

We urge the City Council to exercise its oversight powers to insure that the above issues are addressed.

Respectfully submitted,

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TEAMSTERS LOCAL 237

**Testimony by Teamsters Local 237 Secretary-Treasurer Ruben Torres
Before the New York City Council
Committee on Public Housing
Regarding The New York City's Housing Authority's New Board**

September 30, 2013

Thank you Chairwoman Mendez and members of the Committee on Public Housing for the opportunity to testify at this hearing.

On behalf of the Teamsters Local 237, I would like to welcome the newest board members of the New York City Housing Authority: Beatrice Byrd, Willie Mae Lewis, Dihann Billings-Burford and Kyle Kimball. We look forward to working with you to make the nation's largest public housing authority the best in the country.

We also look forward to the firing of the New York City Housing Authority Chairman John Rhea, by the new mayor. For too long, he has sat on his hands while the authority's mismanagement and incompetence affected hundreds of thousands of New York families.

Many in attendance today are well aware of the problems NYCHA experiences under Bloomberg and the former board. We applaud the new law restructuring the board by adding three additional members, three of which are required to be residents of public housing, making these positions part-time and limiting the pay.

We agree this new board structure will promote participation from NYCHA residents, save the city money and help direct resources to essential maintenance and repairs.

These are all good changes because today, NYCHA is on the verge of financial collapse – operating with a \$60 million dollar deficit and a \$6 billion dollar backlog in major capital improvements. According to the city's public advocate's office the city lost nearly 200,000 affordable rental housing units, between 2002 and 2008.

The once well respected, shining example of civic responsibility that received national acclaim is now another example of government failing the people.

NYCHA's mismanagement is even more egregious when you look at how it treats its residents. Last summer *The Daily News* uncovered a huge backlog of needed repairs. In fact, there were 10,000 requests that weren't scheduled until 2014. This is unacceptable.

Local 237 is proud to represent more than 8,000 NYCHA employees, some of whom are NYCHA, residents and we're concerned with every person that calls the city's public housing home. With a population larger than Atlanta, Cleveland or Miami, we must fight for NYCHA residents and save the nation's best public-housing system. Not only because they are the blue-collar worker who drive our city's economy, but because it's the right thing to do for our fellow New Yorkers.

Because we feel that the best people to develop a plan to fix the agency are the people who help run it,

Local 237 brought together our employees, resident leaders, civic advocates and public housing experts to create a plan that would truly improve NYCHA. We released the report of our Task Force earlier this year, although many of our suggestions remained ignored. We hope that this new board, more representative than the last one, will take up these worthy ideas in their efforts to correct many of the wrongs in NYCHA.

Critical to that effort is to continue to protect and reward the hard working employees at NYCHA. Too often under the last Administration, many jobs were given to outsourced companies that do not care about the public housing system but only their bottom line. We know that there were more plans to continue giving more and more jobs to outside workers, who in many cases do not have the expertise or training to do the work correctly. That is not good for NYCHA residents or New York City's middle class, many of whom depend on public sector jobs to provide for their families. NYCHA needs to have its own dedicated workforce that knows the issues and knows that job. That is good for everyone.

We are eager to begin work with the board to aggressively pursue government funding for NYCHA; monitor spending by the agency; stop payments for police and sanitation services; stop warehousing apartments; cancel plans to sell property to developers; and hire more union workers.

With great resident participation, we will take on the challenges that have festered under the previous administration and work to keep public housing strong for decades to come.

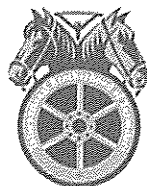
Thank you again Chairwoman Mendez for the opportunity to testify. I commend your continued work on NYCHA and look forward to working together with you and other members of the New York City Council to make the city's public housing the best in the world.

AN IMMEDIATE ACTION PLAN FOR THE NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY



Local 237 Task Force To Fix Public Housing

December 2012



One month before Hurricane Sandy struck, a group of residents, community organizations and housing experts came together at the urging of Gregory Floyd, President of Teamsters Local 237 to formulate solutions to the problems facing the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). While the storm and its aftermath exposed weaknesses at the Authority, it also made clear why NYCHA has endured while public housing in other cities has declined – the dedication of the community and its workers. Throughout NYCHA developments, residents looked out for and helped one another, particularly the most vulnerable. In the hardest hit developments, including the Red Hook Houses, workers went door-to-door to check on residents and confirm they were safe. Elevator mechanics remained on the job (as volunteers) even when they were told to go home. And community groups ensured that residents had food and essential supplies days before FEMA or the Red Cross arrived.

Throughout the many discussions and correspondence about how to improve NYCHA, one thing became abundantly clear: Residents, Local 237 members and community leaders all shared an unwavering commitment to restore public housing. Longtime residents spoke of having happily raised their children there and having interacted with development managers who knew their names and understood their needs. NYCHA workers, the majority of whom are represented by Teamsters Local 237, take pride in their jobs but expressed their frustration in not always being able to get the job done. These workers too often feel saddled with a bureaucratic system that makes repairs a longer, inefficient, impersonal and costly process. Community leaders echoed a desire to counter the aggravation and anxiety communicated by residents. It has become increasingly difficult for them to assist residents in cutting through the mounting “red tape” as well as counsel them on how to navigate the legalese. All agreed that helping residents achieve a quality of life that allows them to feel at home in their apartments and communities may be daunting, but can be achieved.

In the wake of the dangers and dysfunction made clear by Hurricane Sandy, we are confident that our recommendation report provides a realistic blueprint for improving NYCHA. Unlike the \$10 million Boston Consulting Group report paid for by NYCHA, we know that our suggestions will work because they are derived from the people who actually live and work there. Their knowledge, history and experience are reflected in every practical solution offered to a familiar problem identified.

Members of the Task Force consider this report a “work in progress” and part of an on-going commitment to returning New York City’s public housing to a shining example of municipal achievement. As such, the recommendations herein should be viewed as an initial investment in creating a healthier public housing system.

Local 237/NYCHA Task Force Members

President Gregory Floyd, the Officers, Staff and Members of Teamsters Local 237

Victor Bach, Community Service Society

Allen Brawer, Policy Research Group

Nicholas Dagan Bloom, New York Institute of Technology and author, *Public Housing That Worked*

Mo George, Community Voices Heard Public Housing Partnership Director

Madelyn Innocent, Public Housing Resident and Community Voices Heard Member-Leader

David R. Jones, Community Service Society

Bishop Mitchell G. Taylor, East River Development Alliance

Lucy Newman, The Legal Aid Society

Jim Vogel, Office of State Senator Velmanette Montgomery

Doris Welch, Retired NYCHA Superintendent and Housing Committee member, League of Women Voters

Overview

NYCHA is an important and unique institution that must be preserved. As the oldest and largest public housing organization in America — dating back to 1934 — it had long been considered a national success story and a tremendous source of municipal pride. Indeed, NYCHA has thrived for a very long time. Despite the many challenges facing public housing in America, NYCHA is fundamental to the character and vitality of New York City.

Under previous Federal administrations, the budget for NYCHA was diminished by \$1.5 billion dollars and never restored. As a result, the infrastructure suffered neglect that was highlighted by the failures, especially in Zone A developments, during Hurricane Sandy.

Yet, the need for public housing is as great as ever and is essential to sustaining healthy communities for all New Yorkers. NYCHA is the most significant source of New York City's affordable housing. More than 400,000 New Yorkers call a NYCHA apartment home. Another 235,000 renters depend on NYCHA administered Section 8 assistance in private housing. Approximately 8% of all New York City residents live in NYCHA developments. Nearly half of families living in a NYCHA development are employed and another 38% of NYCHA families are headed by a senior citizen.

In October 2012, Teamsters Local 237, which represents the majority of Housing Authority workers — nearly 9,000 members — convened a Task Force of resident leaders, community groups, social service organizations and experts in public housing to create a plan for the immediate improvement of New York City's public housing.

NYCHA's financial condition and ever-increasing backlog of urgent repairs are well documented. What may be less well understood is the true value of NYCHA's resources. NYCHA officials often refer to its "assets". But its assets are not only land and buildings. They are also the residents and workers who form the backbone of the developments, and who have done so for over 75 years. Their commitment, personal experience, and knowledge are invaluable.

Residents, workers and management have historically worked together to solve problems and build communities. Nearly a third of Local 237's 9,000 NYCHA workers live in public housing. But as greater levels of bureaucracy have been added and decision-making is increasingly carried out away from the development level by a centralized system, the frustration and dissatisfaction felt by both residents and workers has intensified. Routine repairs have a 2-year backlog and routine maintenance is no longer routine. Even before the damage caused by Hurricane Sandy, the physical deterioration of NYCHA developments caused in part by key operational decisions made by managers and consultants with too little practical knowledge or history in public housing, lead to employee and resident injuries and chronic health conditions.

Summary of Recommendations

Among NYCHA's greatest strengths and best hope for the future are its residents and workers. They alone possess the critical institutional knowledge to provide the solutions to some of NYCHA's most pressing needs. Residents and frontline workers offer a breadth of practical experience, community pride, cultural awareness, and a sense of history that outside management consultants cannot provide at any price.

While it is imperative that community activists and unions continue to work with the Authority to obtain desperately needed government funds, the Local 237/ NYCHA Task Force has identified numerous solutions which can be implemented now to immediately improve the lives of residents and the workers who serve them. All of the recommendations can be implemented at little cost and in many cases they will lead to overall cost savings.

Much can be achieved through greater communication, cooperation and collaboration between NYCHA management, workers and residents. Success has been demonstrated time and again.

NYCHA residents and Local 237 members working at the Housing Authority are acutely aware of the potentially deadly consequences of deferring maintenance. In 2008, after the tragic death of 5-year old Jacob Neuman in a broken NYCHA elevator, Teamsters Local 237 worked closely with NYCHA management to educate the public and convince elected officials to commit the funds needed to repair and maintain the Authority's elevators — something for which residents long advocated.

Throughout Hurricane Sandy and its difficult aftermath, residents, workers and community organizations worked together to safely get through the crisis. Badly battered but not totally broken, public housing and its residents did survive. Sandy just reinforced the importance of public housing and necessitates a renewed commitment by all.

It is through this type of collaboration that the promise of NYCHA can be restored.

The following are among the critical topics the Task Force has addressed and offers related solutions in an effort to make NYCHA more effective and efficient:

- Disaster Preparation – *page 4*
- Streamlining operation processes, including repair appointments – *page 5*
- Improving and overhauling the centralized call center – *page 7*
- Nurturing existing institutional knowledge and resources – *page 8*
- Making critical health and safety improvements in daily operations – *page 10*
- Ensuring that eligible Section 8 holders are not mistakenly terminated – *page 11*

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

The following operational problems were discussed and noted by the Task Force and the Local 237 union members who work at NYCHA. We believe that the implementation of the suggested solutions will address issues critical to improving public housing in our city.

■ Disaster Preparation

PROBLEM:

As with many government entities, NYCHA was not adequately prepared to protect residents and property from the damage caused by Hurricane Sandy. Two weeks after the storm, more than 4,000 NYCHA residents still lacked power and 18,000 residents were without hot water or heat. During the restoration process residents decried the lack of information or updates from the Authority.

SOLUTION:

A comprehensive emergency disaster and recovery plan must be developed in conjunction with the Office of Emergency Management and with the input of residents and workers' unions that incorporates the lessons learned during Sandy. Because the nature and risks of emergencies change over time, the plan should be thoroughly reviewed every 5 years, or as new threats emerge. For the plan to be effective, drills should be conducted annually at each development, ensuring that every level of the NYCHA community is prepared as best as possible and establishing expectations and communication channels before an actual emergency occurs.

PROBLEM:

Despite a coordinated effort to evacuate residents living in buildings within Zone A before Hurricane Sandy hit, many chose to remain in their homes. Residents had varied reasons for staying in place during the evacuation, but a common fear expressed was that they would lose their homes. This worry was caused in part by what occurred in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, where public housing was significantly reduced, not only by the immediate impact of the storm but also during the subsequent recovery and rebuilding process.

SOLUTION:

Create a policy that allows residents to quickly return to living in their apartments. In cases where the extent of damage renders building uninhabitable – either temporarily or permanently – guarantee that any displaced resident will have a right to equivalent affordable public housing within New York City and as close to their previous home as practical.

■ *Streamlining Operation Processes, Including Repair Appointments*

Few problems frustrate residents and workers more than the current system of scheduling and carrying out repairs. Recent NYCHA attempts to streamline, computerize and centralize the process have not been effective and continue to result in adverse consequences for residents and housing.

PROBLEM:

A backlog of repairs, compounded by appointments that are not met, leading to disrepair and frustration by the workforce and residents.

SOLUTION:

Print out the next week's appointments seven (7) days in advance and use it to remind (by phone, email or note placed under the door) the resident of the appointment. If possible, do another set of reminders to residents the day before as well. Additionally, a system should be set up to allow residents to reschedule appointments within a reasonable period if the date they are being reminded of no longer works for them.

PROBLEM:

Plastering after plumbing work is constantly delayed, leaving open holes in the wall.

SOLUTION:

Automatically schedule plastering for day after plumbing work is completed. Rather than each appointment needing to be set separately, multiple appointments ought to be possible to schedule in a row so that, for instance, plumbing is followed by plastering then followed by painting.

PROBLEM:

When parts are not available to the skilled trades workforce, a time consuming search of other developments to find the parts takes place.

SOLUTION:

Create in each borough two centrally located shops for plumbing, electrical, plastering and carpentry parts. Access would be restricted so as to prevent theft. A centralized, coordinated inventory tracking system should also be created. While this system may already exist, it is currently not put to the best use.

PROBLEM:

Inadequate pest control of the areas near on-site dumpsters are not only an eyesore, but have raised health concerns among residents.

SOLUTION:

Implement an expanded and comprehensive extermination and pest control program including procedures such as hosing down area around the dumpster on a daily basis.

■ *Improving and overhauling the centralized call center*

PROBLEM:

The Call Center Maximo computer system has made the scheduling of repairs less efficient, for example, the call center software does not allow the scheduling of appointments on the same day back-to-back.

SOLUTION:

An overhaul of the system is needed. Change the computer software to match needs of repairs (i.e. multiple aspects of a job together), and work with unions to set up a system that realigns with development based housing management.

PROBLEM:

Call center representatives often have different levels of knowledge as it pertains to the various tasks needed to fully complete a job. Representatives are unable to do anything about the wait time and are not trained to ask relevant questions to properly assess resident needs and urgency. They also cannot schedule several appointments at one time, so that, for example, a painter can come to the apartment right after the plasterer does his job without a separate resident call and a year-long wait time.

SOLUTION:

Call center operators should be trained annually in basic repair techniques to ensure they are able to aid residents in determining the type of repairs needed. They should also be able to set appointments closer together and closer to the time of the call.

PROBLEM:

Due to lack of shared information, residents do not always know how to most effectively utilize the centralized call center to get their repair needs addressed.

SOLUTION:

NYCHA should create and distribute materials in residents' primary language explaining how to call the centralized call center and how to follow up to ensure repairs are completed.

■ *Nurturing existing institutional knowledge and resources*

PROBLEM:

Resident associations lack independent technical assistance (i.e. legal, architectural, planning) as a growing number of them face NYCHA proposals for private redevelopment of underutilized property in public housing communities.

SOLUTION:

The HA indicated it has \$15 million of unused Tenant Participation Activities (TPA) funds, a portion of which could be utilized for funding. NYCHA and the Citywide Council of Presidents (CCOP) should come to an agreement on a set-aside of these funds for independent technical assistance. TPA earmarked for education and organizing should also be used to train resident leaders and TA Executive Board on how to help residents in navigating the repairs system.

PROBLEM:

The Authority has a loss of senior personnel with long-time experience. Their valued experience and knowledge will be lost.

SOLUTION:

Create a retiree advisory group of former managers and superintendents that would meet on a periodic basis with senior management of the Authority and review current problems and add their own experiences in trying to resolve similar issues.

PROBLEM:

Lack of consistent information being given to the residents and workforce. This creates confusion and lack of accountability.

SOLUTION:

Create borough committees with one representative from the HA borough office, the residents, Community Based Organizations and Local 237 that would meet quarterly to share information, identify issues and resolutions.

PROBLEM:

NYCHA's written procedures have not been thoroughly assessed and updated in decades. They include numerous outdated and irrelevant procedures as well as a lack of prioritization that leads to contradictory direction, confusion and inefficiencies.

SOLUTION:

Establish a committee of management and union development personnel to review the current procedures with the intent of insuring manageability of the housing developments through prioritization and the deletion of redundant, obsolete and impractical procedures.

■ *Making critical health and safety improvements in daily operations*

PROBLEM:

Crime within NYCHA developments poses a serious danger to residents and workers. According to the NYPD, crime in public housing has increased by 14% since 2010. While a comprehensive strategy is needed, immediate steps must be taken to lessen the daily fear experienced by all. According to NYCHA, crime has been reduced by 25% on average in developments that have security cameras installed. Yet while NYCHA received \$42 million in public funds to install security cameras, only a small fraction of that money has been spent over the past few years. Among the factors for delays cited by management was the selection of appropriate sites for the cameras.

SOLUTION:

In consultation with residents, work with the NYPD to determine how and where to place cameras. Department guidance will help to expedite the selection process and ensure that cameras are installed where they can most effectively discourage crime. While NYCHA says that it has consulted with the NYPD on camera placement, recent reports suggest that cameras have been installed in low crime locations rather than nearby crime hotspots. To be most effective, cameras should be monitored live (VIPER Cameras) by security guards or trained employees. In addition to installing cameras, buildings should be better secured by replacing and repairing faulty entrance doors and locks and by installing wireless intercoms.

PROBLEM:

Preventable health and safety hazards are causing injuries and illness for both workers and residents. In 2011, NYCHA reported costs of over \$18 million related to on the job injuries. There is great difficulty in implementing health and safety programs. Little or no follow through takes place (i.e. lack of progress on ergonomic study).

SOLUTION:

Currently policies are developed by the HA Risk Management office and implemented by the Operations office without direct communication. Numerous studies show that the most effective approach to improving health and safety conditions is strong collaboration between workers and management. There should be a committee created to include Risk Management, Operations and the union.

■ *Ensuring that eligible Section 8 holders are not mistakenly terminated*

PROBLEM:

In 2010, NYCHA made two administrative changes that have caused major hardships to Section 8 participants. First, Section 8 files and other functions were computerized. The second change replaced individual Housing Assistants who worked directly with tenants to manage their cases and complete annual reauthorizations with a centralized call system where tenants speak to someone with no knowledge of their cases. As a result of these changes, some participants in the Section 8 program have been mistakenly terminated. For example, renters who are on fixed incomes, such as SSI/SSD, have been terminated without an exhaustive attempt by NYCHA to verify income as part of the recertification. This has resulted in unnecessary resident disruption and staff usage.

SOLUTION:

- Provide a thorough review of facts before a termination letter is issued.
- Insure that a Supervisor at NYCHA reviews all terminations before they become official thereby ensuring that: (a) the correct notices were sent out; (b) the notices were sent to the correct address and (c) that NYCHA actually requested the correct documents before terminating.
- Redesign ineffective Section 8 procedures and policies that have caused backlogs, slow turn around times and inefficiencies.

Local 237/NYCHA Task Force

The group of tenants, union workers and members of some of New York City's leading community service organizations brought together by Gregory Floyd, President of Teamsters Local 237 — representing nearly 9,000 NYCHA workers, a third of whom are also public housing residents — offers real solutions in real time.

The Local 237/NYCHA Task Force developed a plan of action with an eye toward offering suggestions that have little or no cost and, in fact, could actually result in cost savings. Indeed, many of the suggestions that are offered should be considered a priority list of short-term and immediately ready-to-implement recommendations.

The Task Force acknowledges that, for their work to be truly effective, this body needs to be on-going. Therefore, additional recommendations will be offered or expanded through the continuing input of the Task Force, which hopes to convene periodically and provide a constant source of suggestions, insights and support. The net result will be NYCHA developments that are greatly improved because the connectivity to its residents and workers has been restored and utilized. Indeed, this recommendation report underscores a basic premise of the Task Force: NYCHA's greatest "assets" are its residents and workers. We just tapped into this reservoir of riches.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/30/13

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: TIMOTHY SULLIVAN

Address: CITY HALL

I represent: THE BLOOMBERG ADMINISTRATION

Address: CITY HALL

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Carmen Greene

Address: 115 E. 106th St

I represent: CVH

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: REMILODA FERGUSON

Address: _____

I represent: Local 237 Teamsters

Address: _____

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Date: _____

Name: Rueben Torres (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: LOCAL 237 Teamsters

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: Sept 30th 2013

Name: Shirley Jones (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: AMSTERDAM HOUSES - Community Voices Heard

Address: MAD

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Date: _____

Name: MARIA RACHECO (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: UPPER 5 - Community Voices Heard

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MICHAEL NOBLE

Address: 264 10TH AVE, 6A, NYC 10001

I represent: MY FAMILY

Address: _____

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/30

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tim Sullivan,

Address: Deputy Mayor Economic

I represent: Development

Address: _____

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