

## **ANNUAL REPORT MARCH 31, 2015**

**AMHERST HOUSING AUTHORITY  
33 KELLOGG AVENUE  
AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS**

***Paul Bobrowski, Chair***

***Judy Brooks, Vice Chair***

***Laura Quinn, Treasurer***

***Peter Jessop, Assistant Treasurer***

***Constance Kruger, Governor's Appointee, Member***

***Denise LeDuc, Executive Director***

**AMHERST HOUSING AUTHORITY  
33 KELLOGG AVENUE  
AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS 01002**

**ANNUAL REPORT AMHERST HOUSING AUTHORITY**

The Amherst Housing Authority respectfully submits its Annual Report to the citizens of the Town of Amherst, Ms. Chrystal Kornegay, Undersecretary of the state Department of Housing and Community Development, the Secretary's Representative of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and State Auditor Suzanne Bump for the year ending March 31, 2015.

The members and staff of the Amherst Housing Authority continue to reaffirm their continued commitment to serve all the citizens of Amherst, including those who reside in the several buildings that the Authority owns, the AHA tenants who reside in privately owned buildings in the Town of Amherst, and the voucher holders of the Federal Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Sincerely,

Paul Bobrowski  
Chair

## **BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

The Amherst Housing Authority was organized under Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 121B where the voters of the Town of Amherst elect four members of the Board at large and the Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts appoints one member. All members serve five-year terms. The members establish policies regulating the operation of the Amherst Housing Authority. Regular Board meetings are held on the fourth Monday of the month in the community room at Ann Whalen Apartments, or at other times as scheduled. Members of the Amherst Housing Authority Board of Commissioners are:

<b>Commissioner</b>	<b>Term Expiration</b>
Paul Bobrowski	April 2015
Constance Kruger(Governor's Appointee)	May 2017
Laura Quinn	April 2017
Peter Jessop	April 2019
Judy Brooks	April 2016

Peter Jessop is the Authority's appointee to the Town's Community Preservation Act committee.

At their annual meeting held in April, Paul Bobrowski was elected Chair, Judy Brooks Vice Chair, Laura Quinn Treasurer, Peter Jessop Assistant Treasurer and Constance Kruger Member.

## **AMHERST HOUSING AUTHORITY HIGHLIGHTS**

The AHA continues to receive high marks from the Real Estate Assessment Center Team (REAC) and Section Eight Management Assessment Program (SEMAP), deeming the AHA to be a High Performer in both areas. The AHA had several inspections during the year from various state and regulatory entities with the results being favorable for the AHA.

### **Modernization Projects:**

The AHA continues to be successful in its pursuit of state and local funding. During this fiscal year the following projects were in process or completed.

- The installation of a heating and hot water systems at the Ann Whalen Apartments are in the process of being completed. A funding offset in the amount of \$65,000 was acquired from Berkshire Gas.
- Architectural plans for the renovations of kitchens and some baths of the 79 apartments at Ann Whalen have been approved by AHA and DHCD. The project is currently out to bid with the anticipation that the renovations will begin in early summer 2015. This HILAPP project has \$110,000 of local CPA funds and \$165,000 of CDBG funds, with up to a 2:1 match by DHCD.
- The AHA was awarded \$38,100 of CDBG funds that were re-purposed to renovate a two bedroom wheelchair accessible bathroom in our federal public housing development known as Watson Farms. This project was completed in December 2014.

- A grant from Community Action's WMECO Low Income sustainability funds enabled the AHA to upgrade the parking lot and exterior building lighting at the Ann Whalen Apartments in January 2015. The value of this grant was \$14,146.00.
- DHCD's Health and Safety funds were used to repair two sections of damaged sidewalks at Chestnut Court in June 2014. The value of this project was \$5,254.50.
- Architectural plans for the interior renovation of all five wheelchair accessible apartments at John Nutting (689) property were completed. This HILAPP project has a combination of DOER funds \$241,243, HILAPP Cap of \$482,486 and Vacancy funds of \$74,250. This project was initially proposed to have a geo-thermal system; however the bids for the geo-thermal exceeded the project budget and were removed from the scope.
- A new foundation drainage system will be installed at three of the five Chestnut Court apartment buildings. The drainage system will address the problem of standing water in the crawlspaces of these three buildings. Sidewalks, parking lots and the roadway will also be repaved with this contract. The award has been made to the low bidder and the work will begin in late May.
- Extensive renovations to three apartments at a managed property (Pomeroy Lane Cooperative) were completed in the late fall of 2014.

The following projects have received funding approval during this fiscal year and are in queue to be done in the near future:

- The AHA applied for CDBG funds through the town of Amherst (a mini-entitlement community) in the amount of \$162,980 to renovate two apartments, one wheelchair accessible bathroom and carpeting in both foyers.
- The FY'15 Health and Safety Funds will be completed by June 30, 2015 and will address repairs to three catch basins at our 705 property on Fairfield and the 667 property at Ann Whalen. These funds will also take care of extensive tree trimming at Chestnut Court, in an effort to keep the property safe from falling trees/limbs.

The AHA rolling five-year capital plan was approved by the Board of Commissioners at the March 2015 meeting and subsequently sent to DHCD for approval. A dozen residents participated in the discussion of the capital plan. The following items are on the plan for the near future:

- Installation of surveillance cameras at exterior entrances to the Ann Whalen Apartments
- Renovation of a bathroom at 36 Sunrise Avenue (689) property
- Replacement of five boilers at Chestnut Court (667) property
- Removal of an underground de-commissioned oil tank and restoration of a retaining wall at the Jean Elder Apartments

Management at the AHA will continue to look for available community resources to identify funds to address capital improvement projects.

# **AMHERST HOUSING AUTHORITY STAFF**

## **Administrative Personnel**

Executive Director	Denise LeDuc
Director of Asset Management	Nancy Schroeder
Director of Housing Programs	Debbie Turgeon
Housing Manager	Kristen Comeau
Leased Housing Representative	Angela Russell
Staff Accountant	Clara Rowan
Support Service Coordinator	Juana Trujillo *
Leased Housing Administrator	Erin Guzowski
Administrative Coordinator	Jason Berry
Applications Clerk	Eleanor Mielosyk *

## **Maintenance Personnel**

Maintenance Foreman	John Summers
Maintenance Mechanic	Pedro Ortega
Groundskeeper/Custodian	Dana Glazier
Maintenance Laborer	Chad Howard

## **Contract Staff**

Fee Accountants	Chaput & Feeney, LLP
Counsel-State Programs	Patricia LaFore, Esq.

\* Part-time

## AMHERST HOUSING AUTHORITY HOUSING

<b>NAME OF BUILDING</b>	<b># OF UNITS</b>	<b>FUNDING TYPE</b>	<b>BUILDING NUMBER</b>	<b>DATE OF OCCUPANCY</b>
<u>ELDERLY/ HANDICAPPED</u>				
Chestnut Court Apts.	30	State	667-1	1962
Ann Whalen Apts.	80	State	667-2	1975
Jean Elder House	23	State-Private	667-3	1980
<u>FAMILY</u>				
Watson Farms Apts.	15	Federal	085-1	1982
Stanley St.	2	State	705-2	1988
Jenks St.	4	State	705-3	1989
Olympia Drive	4	State	705-1	1992
Fairfield St.	6	State	705-1	1992
Bridge St./ Market Hill	6	State	705-1	1992
99 Bridge Street	4	Private	Section 8 vouchers	2003
Tamarack Drive	4	Private	Section 8 vouchers	2006
<u>HANDICAPPED</u>				
John C. Nutting	5	State	689-1	1981
Moreau House	8	State	689-2	1990
<b>TOTAL UNITS OWNED</b>	<b>191</b>			

## HOUSING UNDER MANAGEMENT CONTRACT

<b>NAME OF BUILDING</b>	<b># OF UNITS</b>	<b>FUNDING TYPE</b>	<b>BUILDING NUMBER</b>	<b>DATE OF OCCUPANCY</b>
Valley Main Street 683/687	11	Private	Section 8 Vouchers and HOME	2008
Pomeroy Lane Cooperative	25	<b>Private</b>	Section 8 Vouchers & Market Rents	2011 (management contract)
<b>TOTAL UNITS</b>	<b>36</b>			

## **Maintenance/Improvements**

The maintenance staff prepared 21 vacant units for occupancy and completed a total of 1,112 work orders. The staff also maintains the grounds and buildings at the Authority's fifteen properties that the AHA owns and or manages.

The AHA continues to emphasize preventative maintenance, and through annual inspections of the units the staff is able to address areas that are in need, or may become an issue.

Property Management meetings are held weekly to discuss and map out a plan for maintenance and unit turnovers to ensure that both management and maintenance are working together on the priorities of each development.

## **Management**

The Authority maintained 9 waiting lists, all of which are currently open. Every two years the AHA updates the waiting lists to ensure that people who have applied are still interested in remaining on the waiting lists. Currently there are a total of 1,866 waiting list applicants, 575 are applicants for elderly/disabled housing and 1,291 have applied for family housing.

As of March 31, 2015, the following units that are owned or managed by the AHA were vacant:  
8 units at Ann Whalen Apartments (these are being held open for relocation during renovation)  
2 units at John C. Nutting which will be undergoing rehabilitation in the next few months  
2 units at the Jean Elder apartments which are being held until the CDBG funds are available to begin the renovation project.

The AHA staff processed 170 income recertification's for state aided tenants; signed leases with 14 new households residing in AHA owned properties and conducted 174 unit inspections.

### **Pomeroy Lane Cooperative**

The Authority completed the fourth year of the management agreement with Pomeroy Lane Cooperative.

### **Main Street**

The Authority continued its current management agreement with Valley Main Street LLC.

In addition to the day-to-day management, maintenance, and administration of the Authority's programs, the AHA staff provides information to the general public, local and state agencies and boards on the services the AHA provides.

## Rental Assistance Programs

The AHA administers four rental assistance programs: the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP), the Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP), and the Department of Mental Health Subsidy Program all funded by the Department of Housing and Community Development. All of these programs permit eligible households to occupy privately owned units. The Authority pays part of the monthly rent directly to the owner, with approximately 133 owners participating in the programs.

The AHA found that it was almost back to pre-sequestration funding that occurred in calendar year 2013 which affected housing authorities across the country. The major challenge the AHA continues to face are the continued increased costs of the subsidy payments. The average housing assistance payment in calendar year 2013 was \$631.34 per voucher month on lease, versus \$656.66 in 2014 and \$661.49 in March of 2015. Due to the increased per unit per month voucher cost, the AHA is unable to lease the entire portfolio of 413 authorized vouchers by HUD. On an average Housing Assistance subsidy payment of \$657.41 (projected in FY'16 budget) the maximum number of vouchers the AHA would be able to lease would be 390 out of the 413 authorized. The average HAP has already increased above the \$657.41 projected HAP cost, therefore the number of vouchers may need to decrease to approximately 388.

The Town of Amherst is located in the northern most tier of the Springfield MSA and its rents are significantly higher than those in the central and southern metropolitan area. The town recently had a study compiled for a Housing Production Plan and a Housing Marketing Study which statistics shows the University of Massachusetts (UMASS) had a student enrollment of 27,569 in 2010, and that number is expected to increase another 3300 students in the years ahead. Approximately 37% or 10,200 of UMASS students live off campus, which has created a supply and demand issue which in turn has affected the cost of rentals in the area. Amherst has historically had lower than a 1% vacancy rate, and housing studies show that high prices and an inadequate housing supply have been a severe problem in Amherst for the past twenty years.

In October 2014 HUD decreased the Fair Market Rents for the Springfield MA MSA, which Amherst is attached to. The AHA board voted to keep the payment standards that were previously approved by HUD the same as 2013 which would not impact the program participants share unless the landlord were to increase rents. The payment standards were approved by HUD at 120% of the 2013 Fair Market Rents and are:

<b>BDRM. SIZE</b>	<b>HUD PUBLISHED FMRs SPRINGFIELD, MA. MSA</b>	<b>120% of Fair Market Rents</b>
0	624	748
1	748	897
2	935	1122
3	1167	1400
4	1330	1596

Even at these increased payment standards it is extremely difficult for program participants to find



affordable housing in the community of Amherst, causing program participants to leave the community should they wish to relocate to a new apartment.

During FY15 there were 17 new admissions in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program and 3 Project Based. The Leased Housing staff processed the following new admissions into other AHA programs: 9 DMH participants, 1 Main Street HOME, 6 MRVP and 1 Watson Farms tenants were processed for admission in FY15. AHA staff completed 403 annual reexaminations for the Housing Choice Voucher Program, 17 for Watson Farms, 3 in the MRVP program, and 4 in the DMH program. In addition, staff processed 321 Section 8 interim reexaminations; 2 for Watson Farms; 2 for MVRP; and 3 for DMH. There were 76 moves during the fiscal year, and 28 participants came off the program either permanently or were transferred permanently to another Housing Authority that could absorb them within their Housing Assistance Payment Budget.

During this fiscal year, 372 annual inspections were completed along with 76 move-in inspections.

The Authority continues to receive a high performer rating by HUD for the Section 8 Management Assessment Program. (SEMAP)

**RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS UNDER CONTRACT**  
**As of 3/31/15**

<b>NAME OF PROGRAM</b>	<b>UNITS</b>	<b>TYPE</b>
Section 8 Rental (413) Max	386	Federal
Mass. Rental Voucher Program ** (8) Max	8	State
Department of Mental Health Subsidy Program	10	State
Federal Public Housing	15	Federal
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>415</b>	

\*\* Six (6) vouchers were un-frozen by DHCD in FY'15 allowing more families to obtain housing assistance.

**Resident Services**

A primary goal for the Amherst Housing Authority (AHA) is to create a supportive environment for our elderly tenants so they can live at home as long as possible. A coalition of tenants, AHA staff and community people created the Wellness Program to address the issues of aging in place for AHA elderly tenants.

The Amherst Housing Authority (AHA) has a proven track record of successfully running a Wellness Program. The Wellness program provides funding for educational and recreational programs to the residents of Ann Whalen Apartments and Chestnut Court. Lisa White, Town Nurse holds weekly

clinics, providing blood pressure screening and health information. Home visits are made to tenants that are homebound.

The AHA sponsors a variety of educational/entertainment/social activities, including:

- In partnership with the VNA/Hospice at the Cooley Dickinson Hospital
- Participating in Nutritional workshops, Cooking Matters, led by UMass nutrition majors.
- Partnered with the VNA/ Cooley Dickinson Hospital's Geriatric Services. The goal of the program is to address the complex needs of older adults, focus on health and promotion, prevent and manage diseases and disabilities in the 55+ population.
- An Alcoholic Anonymous group for residents and community people meets daily at Ann Whalen's community room.
- Weekly evening bible study classes on Monday nights.
- Chair exercise for the elderly – 3 times per week
- Crafts every other Wednesday of the month
- Tuesday Night WWII Bowling
- Thursday afternoon coffee hour
- Bingo every Friday
- Sunday morning multi-cultural/non - denominational services
- Holiday potlucks
- Tenant run/management supported picnics/cookout
- Survival Center – food distribution
- Sr. Aide Program
- Franklin/Hampshire County Home Care participant
- Planning musical fundraising event for the Summer '15

Collaboration with town and social service agencies has been key in establishing successful services/programs for Amherst Housing Authority tenants. Our local partners include:

- Amherst Survival Center – The AHA works closely with the Survival Center, referring tenants for an array of social services. This includes the free clinic, noon time free lunch, and clothing. The AHA also coordinates the Survival Center's food distribution program at Ann Whalen and Chestnut Court.
- Amherst Senior Center – Professional partnerships continue with Maura Plante and Helen MacMillian, both Social Workers at the Senior Center. This partnership enables staff at the AHA and Senior Center to assist tenants with many issues, including elders at risk, referrals to doctors, hospitals and nursing homes.

- Highland Valley Elder Service –The AHA refers tenants for Meals on Wheels, PCA and homemaker services offered by Highland Valley. We have also partnered with Highland Valley to identify elders at risk, and request coordination of services for these elders.
- Department of Mental Health – Ongoing case management and mental health counseling is provided to tenants in need of these services.
- Senior Aide Program-The AHA has partnered with this program for the past six (6) years
- Franklin County Home Care Corp.- Networking with FCHCC to help residents to stay in their homes, or return to their homes after a hospitalization or nursing home stay.

The AHA Resident Services Coordinator, Juana Trujillo, routinely assists the elderly/disabled populations with assistance in the form of referrals, coordination and direct involvement on the following areas of need:

Benefit Assistance  
Case Management  
Domestic Violence Issue  
Drug/Alcohol Problem  
Employment/Voc. Services  
Financial Problem  
Group Activities/Function  
Health and Safety Threats  
Hoarding  
Home/Healthcare Provider  
Housekeeping  
Individual Information Sharing  
Isolation Problem  
Language Related  
Lease Related Issues  
Legal Issues  
Maintenance Problems  
Medical Problems  
Mental Health Problems  
Mental Retardation Problem  
Neighbor Dispute  
Nursing Home Placement  
Nutrition Related  
Personal Hygiene  
Reasonable Accommodation Issue  
Rent Arrearage Issues  
Tenant Move  
Transportation Problem  
Unauthorized Guest

## **Personnel, and Community Involvement**

The AHA welcomed three new staff this year. Housing Manager, Kristen Comeau came onboard in June, and came to AHA from a smaller local housing authority, and has several years' previous experience in Housing Management; she has brought a ton of energy and has great knowledge of DHCD regulations. Leased Housing Administrator, Erin Guzowski was hired in November and along with previous housing authority experience was a paralegal for several years. Maintenance Mechanic, Pedro Ortega was hired in December and has 25 years' experience in property maintenance with several years working with properties subject to REAC inspections.

Denise LeDuc serves on the Town of Amherst's Housing and Sheltering Committee, and is a member of the following organizations: Western Massachusetts Executive Director's Association: MassNAHRO; CHAPA; NAHRO; and the Western Massachusetts Coalition to End Homelessness.

Juana Trujillo is an active member of the Council on Aging (COA) and the Senior Health Advisory Group (SHAG), both of which meet monthly.