

## **AMHERST HOUSING AUTHORITY**

### **Fiscal Year 2014**

The Amherst Housing Authority respectfully submits its Annual Report to the citizens of the Town of Amherst, Mr. Aaron Gornstein, 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, 2014.

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,  
Constance Kruger  
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:

Commissioner	Term Expiration
Paul Bobrowski	April 2015
Constance Kruger (Governor's Appointee)	May 2017
Lauara Quinn	April 2017
Peter Jessop	April 2014
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 May, Constance Kruger was elected Chair, Peter Jessop Vice Chair, Paul Bobrowski Treasurer, and Judy Brooks Assistant Treasurer.

#### **AMHERST HOUSING AUTHORITY HIGHLIGHTS**

The AHA received high marks (97 out of a possible 100) from the Real Estate Assessment Center Team (REAC) that completed a physical inspection on how our Federal Public Housing (Watson Farms) is maintained. The AHA also received the designation of High Performer from the Public Housing Assessment System (PHAS) which incorporates Physical, Financial, Management and Capital Funds.

#### **Modernization Projects:**

The AHA has applied for and been awarded several grants for projects in which significant work is

needed. The awards which occurred in the AHA's fiscal year 2014, will actually be done in calendar year 2014, but in the AHA's fiscal year 15. Modernization and capital improvement projects are continuing, with many projects completed, underway, or with upfront work to develop the project and have it queued in the pipeline. Funding sources include the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the Office of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Amherst's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), WMECO and Berkshire Gas' Low Income Weatherization Services, and the Town of Amherst - Community Preservation Act (CPA)

- All twenty-two (22) 705 family scattered site units were renovated, and the units which had been offline for several years have been rented.
- The AHA has replaced the Emergency Generator and Switchgears at the Ann Whalen Apartments, with the community room kitchen being tied-in so in the event of a power outage, community meals can be prepared for residents.
- The AHA received \$9,000 funding from the WMECO/Berkshire Gas weatherization services to install two new boilers at Sunrise Avenue, which will require only \$5,000 of the \$17,000 from formula funding. This project was complete in March 2014.
- Berkshire Gas has committed \$65,000 toward the replacement of the boiler at Ann Whalen Apartments. The balance of the funds will come from the DHCD Capital Fund. Due to timing and the winter heating season, it was recommended that we wait until the heating season ended in April 2014 to begin the work.
- Kitchen and countertops renovations for two units occurred at Sunrise Avenue.
- New window screens were installed throughout Watson Farms.
- A new front door and entrance was installed at Sunrise Avenue.
- DHCD Health and Safety funds were awarded for the sidewalk repair and drop off at the Jean Elder entry way.
- Repairs to all of the carports at Pomeroy Lane Cooperative were completed.

The following projects have received funding during this fiscal year and are in various stages:

- Through the Town of Amherst CPA Funds, and Community Development Block Grants, along with DHCD's High Leverage Asset Preservation Program (HILAPP) the Ann Whalen apartments will upgrade all kitchens and provide approximately 30 units with bathroom upgrades.
- Through the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources and DHCD's HILAPP, the John Nutting property will obtain a Geo-Thermal heating system, and a renovation of the 5 units located at that property, all of which are handicapped accessible 3 & 4 bedroom units.
- Through the Town of Amherst re-purposed FY 12 CDBG funds, renovations of a wheelchair accessible unit will occur at Watson Farms.
- Through DHCD's Formula Funding, foundation drains will be installed at Chestnut Court
- Through DHCD's Formula Funding, the walkways and driveways at Chestnut Court will be Repaired.
- Renovations at the Pomeroy Lane Cooperative Farmhouse with reserve funds from PLC.

The AHA rolling five-year capital plan was approved by the Board of Commissioners at the March 2014 meeting and subsequently sent to DHCD for approval. Resident and staff participation occurred during the process to identify the greatest areas of need.

Management at the AHA will continue to look for available community resources to identify funds 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	Pam Parmakian
Leased Housing Representative	Angela Russell
Staff Accountant	Clara Rowan
Support Service Coordinator	Juana Trujillo *
Leased Housing Administrator	Janna Tetreault
Administrative Coordinator	Jason Berry
Applications Clerk	Eleanor Mielosyk *

### **Maintenance Personnel**

Maintenance Foreman	John Summers
Maintenance Mechanic	Marc Fleury
Groundskeeper/Custodian	Dana Glazier
Maintenance Laborer	Chad Howard

### **Contract Staff**

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

**\* Part-time**

AMHERST HOUSING AUTHORITY HOUSING

NAME OF BUILDING	# OF UNITS	FUNDING TYPE	BUILDING NUMBER	DATE OF OCCUPANCY
<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	698-2	1990
<b>TOTAL UNITS OWNED</b>	<b>191</b>			

**HOUSING UNDER MANAGEMENT CONTRACT**

NAME OF BUILDING	# OF UNITS	FUNDING TYPE	BUILDING NUMBER	DATE OF OCCUPANCY
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/Capital Improvements**

The maintenance staff prepared 30 vacant units for occupancy and completed a total of 1,055 work orders. The staff also maintains the grounds and buildings at the Authority's fifteen properties that the AHA owns and or manages. In addition, the maintenance staff also did partial renovations on two of the 705 family units and installed a new entry door at our 689 development on Sunrise Avenue. 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 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. A recent update of the waiting lists reduced the total number of applicants from 2,150 to 870 people. 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.

As of March 31, 2014, the following units that are owned or managed by the AHA were vacant:

- 2 units at Ann Whalen Apartments

- 2 units at John C. Nutting which will be undergoing rehabilitation in 2014

- 2 units at Pomeroy Lane Cooperative, one of which will be undergoing significant rehabilitation in 2014

The AHA staff processed 170 income recertification's for state aided tenants; signed leases with 30 new households residing in AHA owned property and conducted 210 unit inspections.

### **Pomeroy Lane Cooperative**

The Authority completed the third year of the management agreement with Pomeroy Lane Cooperative and has agreed to renew the management contract for an additional two-year period.

### **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 142 owners participating in the programs.

This year found the AHA in a difficult situation when the sequestration caused a major shortfall of funding in the program. The AHA had been positioning the program to receive the best possible

funding for the federal calendar year funding of 2013, for program recipients when the sequestration occurred. In order to maximize the funds the program would have available for participants for 2013, the AHA (in FY 13) knowingly added additional participants on the program and utilized approximately \$80,000 in Housing Assistance Payment Reserves, leasing almost all of the Units

Months Leased that were available to maximize and position the program. Even though the sequestration proved to be the “perfect storm” and putting the HCV Voucher program into a shortfall situation, the AHA was able to use the balance of its Housing Assistance Payment Reserves of \$132,000 and was able to receive set-aside short-fall funds from HUD in the amount of \$100,000 to ensure that participants would not be terminated from the program.

In April and May of 2013 the AHA revised the Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan and added several items required by HUD to the plan that addressed what step the AHA would take in the event of a shortfall, up to and including the possibility of termination of voucher participants. HUD approved the AHA policies on the potential shortfall plan. Along with the new policies, the AHA was not authorized to re-lease any vouchers for participants leaving the program; not absorb any portability vouchers for people coming to our area; not allow any participants to move if there was an increased cost to the program; and participate with HUD in telephone triage meetings as necessary on funding issues with discussions on how to reduce the per unit cost of vouchers.

The AHA also struggled with the possibility of having to reduce the payment standards for the period beginning 1/1/2014 due to the Congressional impasse and the amount of funds the AHA was advised it would most likely receive for funding during the 2014 calendar year. Discussions occurred over numerous months which included a Public Hearing where over 100 people attended, many upset that there was a possibility that the AHA would have to reduce the payment standards. The day prior to the board meeting to vote on a possible payment standard reduction, House and Senate budget Committees announced an agreement that would not keep the sequestration moving into the new year, and was welcomed news as the AHA board would take the risk that the funding would be sufficient to keep participants at the 120% of the 2013 FMR level.

There were no new admissions in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, however the Leased Housing staff processed the following new admissions into other AHA programs: 3 project based participants, 5 DMH participants and 2 Watson Farms tenants were processed for admission in FY 14. AHA staff completed 409 annual reexaminations for the Housing Choice Voucher Program, 15 for Watson Farms, 3 in the MRVP program, and 3 in the DMH program. In addition, staff processed 317 Section 8 interim reexaminations; 3 for Watson Farms; 2 for MVRP; and 3 for DMH.

There were 38 moves during the fiscal year, and 40 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. The AHA took on management responsibilities for 4 additional vouchers belonging to other Housing Authorities, and has 2 additional vouchers belonging to the AHA managed by other agencies.

During this fiscal year, 407 annual inspections were completed along with 38 move-in inspections.

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

**RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS UNDER CONTRACT**

As of 3/31/14

<b>NAME OF PROGRAM</b>	<b>UNITS</b>	<b>TYPE</b>
Section 8 Rental (413) Max	388	Federal
Mass. Rental Voucher Program ** (4) Max	2	State
Department of Mental Health Subsidy Program	10	State
Federal Public Housing	15	Federal
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>415</b>	

\*\* Six (6) vouchers are currently frozen by DHCD

**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. Funding from Highland Valley Elder Services enables the AHA to offer this program which provides free nutritious breakfast, health screens, home visits, massage therapy and a variety of lectures and health related presentations. 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:

- Amherst College students interviewing Spanish-speaking tenants for Oral History Project.
- Partnered with the VNA/Cooley Dickinson Hospital's Geriatric Services. Program goal is to address the complex needs of older adults, focus on health and to promote, prevent and manage diseases and disabilities in the 55+ population.
- An Alcoholic Anonymous group for residents and community people meets daily at Ann Whalen.
- Weekly evening bible study classes on Monday nights.
- Yoga and Strength Training every Tuesday and Thursday.
- Crafts every other Wednesday of the month.
- Movie matinee every other Wednesday.
- Musical concerts once a month.
- Sunday morning multi-cultural/non - denominational services.
- Holiday potlucks.
- Tenant run/management supported picnics/cookout.
- Offer smoking cessation workshops and tools such as e-cigarettes, nicotine patches/gum for those interested in quitting.

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.
- Amherst College – the AHA participates in the “friendly visitor” program where elders are matched with students. Students visit elders and spend time together, in the elders’ home or in the community, based on their agreement.
- 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 tenant in need of these services.
- Senior Aide Program-The AHA has partnered with this program for the past six (6) years where the program has provided funding for a senior aide to run the breakfast program at the Ann Whalen Apartments.
- Franklin County Home Care Corp.- Networking with FCHCC to help residents to stay in the 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**

Changes in personnel at the Amherst Housing Authority do not tend to occur with much frequency; however the AHA saw two changes in personnel in fiscal year 14. Chris Warren who was the Assistant Housing Manager since June 1999 left in April, when he moved to Connecticut due to his upcoming marriage. The position was upgraded and Pamela Parmakian was hired to be the Housing Manager. Pam recently moved to this area from Cape Cod, and brings numerous years of varying types of housing experience with her. Joan Bechtold, our recertification clerk retired in November 2013. Joan had been recertifying our 667 elderly/disabled populations since her employment began in March of 2007. The position of recertification clerk was not replaced with a replacement staff but current staff



member Angela Russell, Leased Housing Representative added additional hours to her schedule and is processing the 667 elderly/disabled recertifications.

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

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.