

City of Wichita



Current Critical Issues Faced by Departments

“Critical Issues”

The Housing Services Department faces the following issues which are critical to our ongoing operations, from program as well as efficiency perspectives.

Federal Funding for Section 8 Program

- Issues:** Proposals have been made by the Bush administration to: 1) modify the funding allocation process for Section 8; 2) reduce the rental subsidy amount for Section 8; and 3) reduce administrative fees paid to housing authorities, to operate the Section 8 program. These changes will have significant impacts on housing authorities in general and the Wichita Housing Authority (WHA) in particular.
- Impact(s):** Modifying the process by issuing funds as a block grant, is intended to provide housing authorities with flexibility as to how many clients to serve, at what income levels to focus the program, and what rent amounts to accept. The flexibility is welcomed, however there are currently no proposed changes in the way HUD evaluates housing authorities – which includes assessment of the number of persons served. Under the proposed new system, housing authorities serving poorer clients who need higher subsidies, will serve fewer clients – and would not receive high evaluation ratings. In Wichita, we are housing over 2,600 individuals and families, over half of whom have annual income of \$10,000 or less:
- Reducing the subsidy amounts would force the WHA to serve higher income levels of the poor population in order to pay lower subsidies and keep service numbers up – or maintain the current income guidelines and serve fewer people. This second option would also require the WHA to terminate existing clients in order to stay within the reduced funding level.
- Reducing administrative fees which the WHA receives would require layoffs in the current year, as the reductions will be retroactive to January, 2004. Staff cuts would reduce services to clients – property inspections, certifications, and general program oversight. This proposal was being reconsidered by HUD officials as of the end of May, 2004.
- Actions:** Continue to monitor and engage our local Congressional delegation to oppose such changes without further study and review as to the impacts on local communities.

Safe, Decent, Affordable Housing

- Issue:** Our community has a need for safe, decent affordable housing for all income levels. The need is especially acute for persons at the lowest end of the poverty income scales, and is reflected in: 1) the nearly 3,000 persons on waiting lists for Public Housing and Section 8, and 2) over 1,300 homeless persons in shelters and on the streets of Wichita in 2003, many of whom are among the working poor. There is an additional 'hidden' population of persons in need of safe, decent affordable housing – those whose housing is substandard or persons who are living doubled and tripled up with others.
- Impact:** Given the prospect of reduced funding for Section 8 and the large numbers already on the waiting lists for Section 8 and Public Housing, failure to address the need for affordable housing will only exacerbate the current situation.
- Planning for the homeless population also recognizes the need for low cost housing for a population which is earning very low wages or those who have no jobs. Failure to address the need for affordable housing will severely handicap efforts to provide permanent solutions for our homeless population.
- In addition to the impact of the affordable housing gap on our current situation, there is also a future impact – on the City's ability to attract and retain companies which provide jobs in our community. Large and small corporations will continue to evaluate and consider the availability of 'workforce' housing in making decisions to locate or remain in Wichita. Failure to provide affordable housing which is safe and decent will hamper our economic development initiatives.
- Action:** Support Federal initiatives which provide funding for programs which house the poor (including the working poor) and the homeless.
- Identify a permanent source of funding to support the housing needs of the poor (including the working poor) and the homeless. Options include establishing a housing trust fund or other ongoing mechanism with a permanent source of revenue such as a real estate tax or financial commitment in exchange for tax credit or City financing incentives.

Section 3

- Issue:** The Section 3 provision of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1986 requires recipients of certain Federal assistance, to give Section 3 eligible (qualified) residents and Section 3 businesses, preference in hiring, training and contracts. During a monitoring visit in June, 2003, HUD Office of Economic Opportunity officials found the City's Section 3 procedures, structure and recordkeeping to be "woefully inadequate". The logical conclusion from that assessment is that the City is/was not in compliance with Section 3 requirements. Several departments have been involved in developing a policy which addresses the deficiencies in the monitoring report.
- Impact:** The City's failure to have and follow an acceptable Section 3 policy, could impact future funding. HUD officials indicated that they would make a return visit to Wichita to specifically review this issue – sometime prior to September, 2004.
- The development of a policy to provide the required preferences in hiring Section 3 eligible (qualified) residents, could impact and perhaps require modifications to the City's union agreements with respect to hiring. Personnel and Law Department staff have been involved in discussions regarding the development of a policy.
- The development of a policy to provide the required preference in awarding contracts to eligible Section 3 businesses, could have a positive impact on the City's diversity purchasing practices. Purchasing staff have been involved in discussions regarding the development of a policy.
- Action:** The Housing Department has taken the lead on development of a Section 3 policy and would like to schedule it for presentation to and approval by the City Council no later than July, 2004. It is in its final revision and will be complemented by a new Administrative Regulation, which is also being developed.

CRITICAL ISSUES – PUBLIC WORKS

GENERAL

1) **ADA Compliance.** Staff needs to be adequately trained in ADA mandates in order to assess the adequacy of compliance measures on new projects and renovation of facilities. Lawsuits have been filed against the City, which require (1) a response to the specific allegations, and (2) a coordinated program to address ADA review of new construction projects and a plan to address existing ADA needs in public facilities. This can't be handled by maintenance resources alone.

2) **Wayfinding Signage.** \$10,000 in 2005 and \$10,000 in 2006 has been recommended in the proposed budget, to replace damaged and obsolete signs. An Administrative Regulation has been proposed, establishing rules for this signing program.

STORM WATER MANAGEMENT

3) **Action needed on ERU increase.** (Storm Water fee increases) Drainage projects throughout Wichita are seriously underfunded. Funding needs to be identified, either by increasing the Storm Water 'ERU' fee applied to residential and commercial properties, or by identifying other funding sources. This also impacts the Arterial Street CIP.

4) **Pump stations** are a critical component of the city's drainage system, because the topography does not provide sufficient gravity flow. Existing pump stations need on-going maintenance, to replace worn and broken parts and the pumps themselves. Pump stations #2 (Maple & the Big Ditch) and #4 (Zoo Blvd. & I-235) are currently in near-critical condition. The motors for both pumps need to be rebuilt or replaced, and during any given storm event these pumps could fail. \$495,000 in 2004 and \$495,000 in 2005 is proposed in the pending budget for this purpose.

5) **NPDES Storm Water Compliance** The City's National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment calls for the City to implement a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Program, which is now 7 years old. While parts of it are working as it should, others need attention. Construction site erosion control is one of those areas. A proposal has been drafted to shore up this program, which WABA supports. It needs to be implemented.

6) **Back Yard Drainage issues** A Backyard Drainage Policy has been adopted by the Council to address drainage problems on private properties caused by lot grading during construction and/or landscaping. Staff is working with the Wichita Area Builders Association to revise this policy. Staff will continue to assist citizens in investigating and solving complaints about inadequate drainage on a case-by-case basis.

MAINTENANCE DIVISION

7) **9th Street Bridge at Westlink.** This bridge has deteriorated (large hole in deck) and is not repairable. The bridge needs replacement. Engineering is working with KDOT to find available funding and design is underway. Hopeful for construction this fall. This generates a lot of calls.

8) **Street repairs backlog, especially in residential areas.** A Crack Seal Crew was proposed in budget to catch up on preventative maintenance (\$511,200 in 2005 and \$251,500 in 2006), which has so far not been recommended by Budget staff. Additional money (\$1.5 Million in 2005 and \$1.5 Million in 2006) was also proposed for Contracted Street Maintenance, which was not endorsed.

9) **Street sweeping frequencies declining.** The level of service we are funded for (number of sweepers and operators) is not satisfactory to citizens, and detrimental to storm water quality (NPDES issue). An additional sweeper and operator were proposed in the 2005/2006 budgets (\$26,460 and \$7,960 respectively) but have not been recommended by Budget staff.

ENGINEERING

10) **Capital Project Tracking System.** Engineering and IT/IS have worked together to develop a system to track six aspects of capital projects: schedule, financial, regulatory, approvals and engineering. In 2003, 317 projects totaling almost \$78 Million were awarded; and another 134 contracts for more than \$6 Million for design engineering services. \$96,300 in 2005 and \$110,340 in 2006 has been recommended in the proposed budget.

11) **In-House Inspections vs. Consultants.** In 2003, the City contracted more than \$1.8 Million worth of construction inspection. PW proposed adding a 2-person survey crew and a 4-person inspection crew to provide project staking, inspection and engineering administration for capital projects (primarily subdivision projects) as an alternative to using some consultants. Initial equipment would include vehicles, radios and survey equipment. Projected costs were \$441,520 in 2005 and \$341,540 in 2006. Neither has been recommended by Budget staff.

12) **Fill Critical Positions** – City Engineer, Special Projects Engineer, Special Projects Coordinator

13) **Transportation Planning Issues** – KDOT has expressed concern that The City of Wichita has \$10 Million of federal funding which is not yet programmed. The City (PW and MAPD) are discussing steps to utilize federal money more effectively and timely.

14) **Visual Enhancements on Projects** The have been recent discussions between the City Council, John De'Angelo's Design Committee and Public Works as to appropriate costs for visual enhancements on capital projects. This may require more discussion.

15) **Traffic Signal Assessment Program** – The Traffic Engineer has proposed a policy to at least partially assess the cost of traffic signals on arterial streets to the immediately adjacent development. The Wichita Area Builders Assoc. (WABA) opposes such assessments to residential developments. The appropriateness of assessing arterial signals needs to be discussed.

16) **Subdivision Development Petitions** – The entire petition process needs to be discussed with the new City Manager. Generally, all subdivision work is done by special assessment, and there are a number of issues with that process.

FLEET MAINTENANCE

17) **Equipment Replacement Fund** Since 1993 the Fleet equipment replacement fund has been set at \$2.5 Million/year. As equipment has gotten more expensive and the size of the fleet has grown, the City has fallen behind on replacements, so that there is a current backlog of more than \$10 Million based on mileage.

18) **Central Stores Organization** – Central Stores was significantly downsized in 2002, so that they no longer stock the quantity of parts and materials formerly available. We are operating more on a 'just in time' procurement basis, using City credit cards. Central Stores staffing, service levels and add-on costs are in flux and need to be reviewed. Regulations are needed concerning the use of Central Stores.

19) **Central Maintenance Facility (CMF) Campus – Parking & Storage** – Several

operations (Water Maintenance, Fire Maintenance, Park equipment maintenance) have been relocated to the CMF campus over the past few years. Parking and storage space are overtaxed, and there have been several accidents in which limited space was a factor. Adjacent property has been acquired, which will help, but an overall plan is needed.

NATURAL RESOURCES

20) **Cox Communications Telecom Franchise Issue.** Cox Communications has been offering local telephone service within Wichita since March of 2003. Originally, Cox said they understood that they need a telephone franchise to offer this service in addition to their BTN franchise under which they offer cable TV and high speed internet services. In January 2004, Cox informed the City that they believe that they can offer the telephone service without any additional franchise agreement. Cox representatives will be meeting with Council members and City staff (one or two City council members at a time) in late June.

21) **Landfill Issues.** The City has received proposals for the development of a new local landfill on the "Furley Site". A process to work with the County on selecting a proposal or issuing a new RFP has been developed and approved by the Council. Franchising is not expected to be a part of this process as a majority of the City Council is generally not supportive of using this method to achieve flow control.

22) **Kingsbury Tract Sand Mining.** The City Council has selected Quik Sand (Cornejo) as the preferred developer and a design for the site and a lease agreement are being developed. The Ritchie Company, who also submitted a development proposal, is threatening litigation because they dispute the analysis upon which the selection of a preferred developer was based. The City Council has directed that work with the preferred developer continue.

23) **Brooks Groundwater Contamination.** There are two areas of groundwater contamination at the Brooks Landfill. The first is under a remediation program. At the City's request, this program is under review by KDHE with the hope of reducing the cost to the City while still effectively addressing the remaining pollution. A second plume is currently under investigation as to its extent and level of contamination. Results of this testing are expected later this summer.

BUILDING SERVICES

24) **Add Plumber and Electronics Tech positions –** New water features, fountains, and more complicated building systems have created the need for additional positions.

25) **Compliance with Federal and State regulations.** Life safety systems (fire detection, alarm and suppression) are required by KDHE for all facilities that house children's programs. They are needed at LaPetite Day Care; also, annual testing is needed at LaPetite, Woodard Rec Center, City Hall, the Art Museum, and Evergreen and Alford Libraries. There are also compliance issues with EPA regulations for refrigerants (tracking work orders and maintenance activities), hazardous materials and abandoned fuel tank removal.