



Berkeley Housing Authority

1901 Fairview St., Berkeley, CA 94703
Telephone: (510) 981 5470 Fax: (510) 981 5480

Office of the Executive Director

Berkeley Housing Authority Board of Commissioners
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Communications

To my colleagues on the Berkeley Housing Authority Board of Commissioners

In the past few months individuals critical of our plan to maintain the units we currently own as permanently affordable housing in Berkeley by repositioning them out of the Public Housing Program and into the Section 8 Program, owned and managed by an affordable housing owner, have made a number of false allegations about me, the professional work I do and my motivation for serving on this Board. At our last Board meeting, it was alleged in oral testimony and in writing that I have an ongoing conflict of interest and that as a consequence the process we are engaged in has been corrupted.

I've chosen thus far not to respond publicly to unfounded and inappropriate – and, in my opinion, scurrilous – attacks; I know from my decades of involvement in Berkeley that they come with the territory. But I want to be clear with you, my Board colleagues. I serve on this Board as a volunteer. I do not receive any pay for any of my activities. I agreed to serve because I felt that I could use my professional expertise to help ensure that the Berkeley Housing Authority will be able to continue to provide affordable housing through the Section 8 program for low-income families in Berkeley, and to identify needed funds to modernize the 75 units of BHA owned rental units to a modern market standard and offer supportive services to residents.

I undertook this challenge understanding that hard decisions might have to be made. I believed when I accepted this role, and continue to believe, that this Board can fairly and objectively evaluate the situation and act in the best interests of the community as a whole.

I have dedicated the last two and a half years to developing and protecting a process that invites and encourages every member of the Board to be involved. I have spent countless hours sharing my understanding of the situation and my analysis of our options for saving and improving our housing units and maintaining a viable Section 8 Program in Berkeley. I believe that this commitment is evident in our almost always unanimous votes on the difficult issues we have faced and continue to face. Unlike other boards in the City of Berkeley, we always have an amicable debate and respect each other, even when we have differences.

The attacks on me are unwarranted and unfounded, although not unexpected. They are also more than a little ironic, since I began my commitment to affordable housing as a founder of the Berkeley Tenants Union and of the first statewide tenant organization. My entire career of more than 30 years has been dedicated to low-income populations and to affordable housing. It stands on its own; I am tremendously proud of the contributions I have made to Berkeley and to affordable housing in California and the U.S.

Much has been made of the company for which I've worked for 15 years, ICF International. Working for ICF, I provide training and technical assistance to localities in affordable housing and community economic development. In fact, my employer has no interest and no involvement in the Berkeley Housing Authority. It has no contracts with the City of Berkeley now, and has had none in the last 15 years. ICF played no role in my accepting appointment to the BHA. I serve as an individual, on my own time.

Although the attacks on me have been very painful, I want you to know that I continue to be committed to our process, and I remain dedicated to making sure that these units finally are upgraded to the physical condition they should be in, and remain permanently affordable to large families in Berkeley.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carole Norris". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carole Norris