announcements

Homeless Memorial Vigil
12:00 pm, Wednesday, January 13, 2010
Statehouse steps, Montpelier
Sponsored by the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness

Vermont Housing & Conservation Coalition Legislative Day
Wednesday, February 24
State House, Montpelier
With a budget deficit of $150 million looming, this year will be another challenging time to maintain funding for conservation, affordable housing, and smart growth. Conservation and affordable housing are critical economic development investments that must remain a priority through the challenges of the State’s fiscal crisis.

THIS YEAR MORE THAN EVER -- Please set aside February 24th as a day that you and your organization’s key supporters will spend in Montpelier talking and advocating in the Legislature on the importance of VHCB funding to your organization and the communities it serves.

For further information, contact:
Erhard Mahnke at 233-2902 or erhardm@burlingtontelecom.net
John Shullenberger at 373-2590 or jdsdiann@together.net
Adam Necrason at 223-9988 or necrason@together.net

Online Application System for Housing Choice Voucher Program
VSHA has implemented a new online application system for the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Effective January 5, 2010, applicants can submit an initial application for VSHA’s Section 8 Voucher program online by completing a short questionnaire.

It takes about 3-5 minutes to complete an application, and the applicant receives an immediate confirmation that their application has been submitted. The online application can be located at the VSHA website, www.vsha.org. On the left hand side of the webpage, click “online voucher application” to begin the process. Applicants will be able to use this system to check their wait list status online as well. They can do so by going to www.waitlistcheck.com, and entering their year of birth and social security number.

If you have any questions about how this system works, please contact the VSHA Intake Office: Bethany Lunn at 828-1364 or Louisa Olson at 828-1248.
Consolidated Plan 2010-2015 Public Hearing Announcement

The State of Vermont’s Department of Economic, Housing and Community Development will conduct a public hearing to hear views about the State’s housing and community development needs for 2010-2015, including non-housing needs and development of proposed activities, and review past performance related to its HUD Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development Programs. The plan constitutes the State’s application for, and outlines priorities for use of approximately $12 million in Federal funding provided annually to the State for the Community Development Block Grants (CBDG), Home Investment Partnerships (HOME), and Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG). The State’s Consolidated Plan is available at www.dhca.state.vt.us/housing.

The date of the hearing is Tuesday, January 26, 2010, 3:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. at the AOT Board Room, North Lobby, 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier – fifth floor. Handicapped accessible. Accommodations for persons with disabilities, and interpreters will be made available upon request; contact Arthur Hamlin at (802) 828-3211; TTY#1-800-253-0191, or in writing to Arthur Hamlin, Housing Program Coordinator, Vermont DEHCD, 1 National Life Drive, 6th Floor, Montpelier, VT 05620 by 4:30 p.m. Friday January 15, 2010.

If you cannot participate in the January 26 public hearing, you are encouraged to attend regional meetings including:
- Brattleboro on January 12, 2010 at 11:00 A.M. Town of Brattleboro Municipal Building
- St. Albans on January 13, 2010 at 5:30 P.M. City of St. Albans City Council Chamber
- Village of Barton on January 14, 2010 at 4:00 P.M. at Memorial Hall

The state is also taking comments via an online survey; to access the survey, go to www.surveymonkey.com/s/CCK66QC

Annual Point in Time Count

The annual Point in Time Count will be Wednesday, January 27th starting at 6pm and lasting through Thursday, January 28th at 6pm. The count is the best representation of the number and needs of homeless individuals and families in Vermont. It also determines which areas in Vermont should receive attention and whether we may qualify for additional funding from the state and federal governments.

PIT instructions and forms will soon be mailed to local CoC contact people. These can also be found at www.helpingtohouse.org under “Informational Resources.” Completed forms should be sent to: VSHA, Daniel Blankenship, One Prospect Street, Montpelier, VT 05602.

*If your agency is a HMIS user, the data will be extracted from either your Service Point or Housing Works software. Make sure to enter accurately and timely for ALL homeless individuals and families you encounter on January 27th.

Local Continuum of Care Coalitions are responsible for spreading the word and forms to their local community providers (regional CoC contacts are listed below). For additional assistance, please contact Brian Smith (802-241-4018) at the Dept. of Mental Health or Daniel Blankenship (802-828-0294) at VSHA.
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Sign-on letters in support of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board

This year it will be another challenging time to maintain funding for conservation, affordable housing, and smart growth. Conservation and affordable housing are critical economic development investments that must remain a priority through the challenges of the State’s fiscal crisis. If you haven’t done so already, please go to http://www.vlt.org/openletter/ to sign on to an open sign-on letter supporting VHCB funding. There is a different letter for each of Vermont’s eleven counties. Please also ask your board members, donors, and other allies to sign on. Deadline is January 15. Contact Elise Annes at the Vermont Land Trust with any questions or comments (262-1206 or elise@vlt.org).

Champlain Housing Trust 25th Annual Meeting

Saturday, January 30, 6pm to 8:30pm
at ECHO on Burlington’s waterfront
Food, cash bar, free exhibits at ECHO, awards presentation and Board elections
Open to the entire family -- child care provided
RSVP to Laurie Drew, 862-6244 or laurie.drew@champlainhousingtrust.org by January 22.

One Vermont Calling for Membership Declaration Submissions

One Vermont is a network of citizens, organizations, and businesses committed to state policies, systems, and public structures that help build a society that works for all Vermonters. It is looking to strengthen its voice by increasing its membership. Even if you receive updates and emails from One Vermont, you may not be a member. Submit a Membership Declaration indicating that you agree with the principles of One Vermont. To do so, go here, fill out the form, and submit it online. You do not need to pay dues to become a member or sign on to the principles.

SAMSHA Releases Video on Ending Chronic Homelessness

Transformation Through Partnerships: Systems Change to End Chronic Homelessness presents the stories of community organizations in two cities and their strategic planning and collaboration efforts to battle chronic homelessness. The films follow the organizations as they build partnerships to leverage resources and effectively meet the needs of people who are homeless, including those with mental illness and substance abuse issues. For more information and to order this DVD, contact SAMSHA’s Health Information Network at 1-877-SAMSHA-7 or visit the SAMSHA website.

Vermont Statewide Housing Conference Sponsorship Opportunity

VHFA is looking for sponsors for the next Vermont Statewide Housing Conference. The conference, scheduled for Thursday, Nov. 18, 2010 at the Hilton in Burlington VT, is the largest housing event in Vermont, bringing together a unique mix of housing financers, advocates, developers, planners, tenants and more.

Signing on early as a sponsor assures you’ll get the full promotional value for your contribution through logo placement on the conference Web site and other promotional material. If you’d like to become a sponsor, contact VHFA now.

Planning has only begun, but anticipated workshops include green building and energy efficiency; state and federal housing policy; housing development; changes as a result of the 2009 stimulus package; and the very popular Housing 101 introductory workshops.

Watch the official conference website for all types of news about the event.
Vermont Community Development Program Application Workshop

VCDP will be hosting an application workshop on Wednesday, February 3, 2010 at their offices at National Life (6th Floor Calvin Coolidge Room), 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, Vermont. Registration and refreshments will begin at 8:30AM with the program starting at 9AM. Please find the agenda here.

Starting January 13, 2010 you will be able to register online for the event and will have the option to pay by check or credit card. Log on to http://www.dhca.state.vt.us/VCDP/Application/Workshops.htm#app and click on the February 3, 2010 date to register. The registration fee for this workshop will be $20.

You should plan on attending the workshop if you are considering applying in the upcoming round - 2009 Cycle III, which has an application deadline of March 9, 2010.

If you have any questions regarding the workshop feel free to contact Cindy Blondin via email (Cindy.Blondin@state.vt.us) or phone at 828-5219.

HUD Ideas in Action

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is looking for ideas on how to improve housing. The department has created “HUD Ideas in Action,” a website devoted to collecting ideas on how to invest in quality, affordable homes and build strong, safe, healthy communities. Anyone can submit ideas to the site, and vote and comment on other people’s ideas. Specifically, HUD’s looking for ideas regarding its FY 2010-2015 strategic plan, and how it can fulfill HUD’s vision of being a partner for residents, partners, employees, and the public over the next five years. Head over to the site to participate.

Important State Policy Documents Online

Last year the Legislature created the Government Accountability Committee to look at ways to restructure State Government to find savings that could help close the State’s $150 million budget gap for fiscal 2011. House Speaker Shap Smith and Senate President Pro Tem Peter Shumlin tasked the committee with finding $30 million in savings. The Committee met throughout the summer and fall, hiring the consulting firm, Public Strategies Group, to assist in its deliberations. The committee’s Steering Team has issued a report identifying $38 million in savings through a broad restructuring of how the State delivers services to Vermonters. Its recommendations will be incorporated into legislation to be considered by the General Assembly over the next several weeks. The report is available online here.

Late in December, the Douglas Administration released an internally prepared report on VHCB, other state housing agencies and the local nonprofit affordable housing entities. The study was one of five so-called Tiger Team reports released by the Administration just before the New Year. The Governor charged the Tiger Teams with looking for efficiency savings in several state and community non-profit service delivery systems. All five reports, including the one on affordable housing, can be found at: http://aoa.vermont.gov/.

Governor Douglas delivered his last State of the State address to the General Assembly last week. The Governor’s speech focused to a large degree on education spending, property taxes and repealing revenue measures enacted last year to help avoid even deeper budget cuts. The full text of the Governor’s speech is available online here. Douglas will deliver his budget speech, which will go into further detail on how the administration plans to close the State’s $150 million budget gap for fiscal year 2011, on Tuesday, January 19 at 2pm.
in the news

Mental Health Faces $20 Million Cut

The Douglas administration is considering a nearly $20 million to mental health services. Cuts under discussion include $10.5 million from the state’s Community Rehabilitation and Treatment program and a $2.7 million cut in funding for adult outpatient care. Times Argus, December 1, 2009 Link to Full Story or PDF

T-HUD Appropriations Bill Signed into Law

President Obama signed H.R. 3288, the FY10 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (T-HUD) appropriations act, into law on December 16. The final T-HUD bill provides $46.1 billion for housing programs, an increase of $4.5 billion over FY09 funding (see NLIHC’s Memo to Members, 12/11). All programs received increased funding except the HOME program, which was level-funded. For several funding sources that saw decreases in funding during the last decade, including HOME and the Community Development Fund, these FY10 increases only restore funding to FY04 or FY05 levels.

In addition to increases in program funding, HUD will launch a new comprehensive housing and neighborhood development program, the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, which will be funded within the HOPE VI program. The final FY10 T-HUD appropriation provides $65 million for a Choice Neighborhoods Initiative from within the $200 million for HOPE VI. Link to the updated budget chart at: http://www.nlihc.org/doc/FY10-chart-12-17-09.pdf

Housing Trust Fund and Public Housing Included in House Jobs Bill

On December 16 the House passed H.R. 2847, the Jobs for Main Street Act, a bill that proposes to spend $75 billion of TARP funds on a variety of job measures, including public works and infrastructure, teachers and police, clean water, and $2 billion for affordable housing. Of that, $1 billion will capitalize the NHTF and $65 million will fund project-based vouchers to be distributed by states in conjunction with NHTF dollars. Vermont stands to receive the state minimum of $3 million in NHTF funds. The funding for the project-based vouchers is to be distributed according to the same formula as the NHTF dollars are distributed. The bill also provides $1 billion for the public housing capital fund. The Senate is expected to act on the bill shortly after it returns to work January 20. The House returns January 12. Work begins soon on FY 2011 federal funding also, with the Obama Administration’s release of its FY 2011 budget proposal in early February. H.R. 2847 is available at http://thomas.loc.gov. Congressman Welch Co-sponsored the House Bill. Senators Leahy and Sanders co-sponsored the Senate counterpart last fall.

House Votes to Extend Tax Credit Exchange and New Markets Tax Credit for for One Year

H.R. 4213, which passed the House in December and has not yet been considered by the Senate, “would provide individuals and businesses with approximately $31 billion in tax relief in 2009 by extending for one year (through 2010) more than forty provisions that are scheduled to expire at the end of 2009. This $31 billion in tax relief includes more than $5 billion in individual tax relief and more than $17 billion in business tax relief. The Tax Extenders Act of 2009 also extends more than $7 billion of tax provisions that encourage charitable contributions, provide community development incentives, provide tax relief in the event of a Presidentially-declared disaster, and support the deployment of alternative vehicles and alternative fuels. The Tax Extenders Act of 2009 provides this relief without adding to the deficit.” Source: H.R. 4213 and HAC News. The bill text is available at http://thomas.loc.gov.

Vermont Homeless Programs Receive $3.3 Million/Continuum of Care Grants

HUD will provide $3.3 million to help 21 Vermont programs help the homeless. The funding is part of nearly $1.4 billion in federal funding going to homeless programs nationwide. The Continuum of Care Grants help everything from street outreach to permanent and transitional housing for the homeless. Source: Burlington Free Press, December 25, 2009 Link to more information
...in the news

2010 Vermont Statewide Housing Needs Assessment Released

The 2010 Vermont Housing Needs Assessment estimates that the pace of new home construction needs to double to meet demand in coming years and push down prices. Prepared by the Vermont Housing Finance Agency for the state as part of the process of drafting a federally-required 5-year housing plan, the report focuses on housing needs of the state's lower-income households, and examines challenges facing special populations, such as seniors and Vermonters with extremely low incomes. Source: Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs, December 22, 2009

Brattleboro Church Sells Tiffany Glass Window

In an effort to make ends meet, a Brattleboro church that provides emergency shelter for the homeless has put one of the church’s stained-glass windows for sale. The window, made in the Tiffany Studios in New York, depicts St. John the Divine, and has already attracted investor attention. Since the word has gotten out about the possible sale of the window, the church has received over $4,000 in donations, and church officials say ideally the window will never have to be sold at all. Source: WCAX.com, January 4, 2010

Design of New Housing Development Accepted by Board

Designs for Shelburnewood, a 265-unit residential development in Shelburne Village, were accepted by the town’s Development Review Board. While this acceptance does not guarantee construction, a decision that has been postponed for up to 45 days, it allows the developers to meet the conditions for up to $2 million in federal and state grants, as well as loan guarantees. If built, the development, a “walkable neighborhood,” will incorporate affordable and market-rate single- and multi-family housing, and elderly and assisted living units. Source: Burlington Free Press, January 7, 2010

2009 Consolidated Plan/CHAS and Updated Section 8 Expiring Contracts Data Released

HUD issued updated housing needs estimates (“2009 Consolidated Plan/CHAS data) this month for use in Consolidated Planning efforts. The data is based on 3- and 5-year averages of data from the American Community Survey (ACS). HUD also published updated data for its Section 8 project-based contracts database this month (as of December 1) for the first time since the spring.

Study Finds Rental Assistance Ranks High on Economic Stimulus Impact

A new report by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) issued on December 15 finds that rental assistance and homeless prevention spending is one of the most productive uses of stimulus funds in terms of its impact on the economy. The author cites the findings of the Congressional Budget Office and others that financial assistance to low and moderate-income households is one of the most effective ways to help the economy, as recipients are more likely to spend any increase in income.

The author estimates that every dollar spent on rental assistance is likely to generate between $1.50 and $2 in additional economic demand. In addition, rental assistance helps shore up the troubled rental market. Given these findings and the fact the $1.5 billion in stimulus funds approved for the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP) cannot meet the current need for housing assistance, the report urges Congress and the Administration to invest another $1 billion in HPRP as part of a proposed jobs bill.
...in the news

Study Finds Housing Assistance Key to Reducing Childhood Hunger

A new study by Children’s HealthWatch and the Boston Medical-Legal Partnership has found that receipt of housing assistance reduces the likelihood that a poor child will be food-insecure and seriously underweight. The findings are based on a review of 10 years of data from Boston Medical Center’s research site. The study also found that food insecurity rates increased from 14% to 26.5% between June 2007 and June 2009, due to increases in housing costs. It concludes that “housing affordability is a public health issue” and that nutrition programs alone cannot solve childhood hunger and urges the State to expand housing aid.

jobs

Director of Homeownership Programs

The Rockingham Area Community Land Trust in Springfield, VT seeks a Director of Homeownership Programs for the management of our NeighborWorks® HomeOwnership Center of Southeastern Vermont. The Center provides homebuyer education, foreclosure prevention services, and grants and loans. Requires at least 5 years relevant experience; excellent communication skills; avid support for affordable housing. Visit http://www.raclt.org/employment/director-of-homeownership/ for job description. Submit resume and cover letter to mhahn@raclt.org. Respond soon; position remains open until filled. EOE.

Something you would like to see in our monthly newsletter?

Submit announcements, news, job postings, pictures, stories, helpful resources, or suggestions to marissa@vtaffordablehousing.org.

Submissions for each month’s newsletter are due by Friday of the first full week of the month. Thanks!