



**Eastern Shore Housing Committee- October 17th Meeting, 3:00pm-4:30pm**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** October 17th, 2023

**Time:** 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

**Attendees:** *Ahmna Khan, Sheri Ewing, Molly Hilligoss, Rachel White, Blondie Pierre, Nikki, Lauren Silverstone, Diane Dressler, Tim Wiens, Tierra Medley, Paul Anderson, Chelsea Hayman.*

***I. Welcome and Introduction***

- **Facilitator:** Ahmna Khan, Director of Housing.
- Ahmna welcomed participants, provided an overview of the committee's purpose, and initiated introductions.

***II. Guest Speaker 1: Paul Anderson, Senior Housing Specialist, Abilities Network – Housing Support Services Overview***

- Paul shared an in-depth overview of the housing support services offered by Abilities Network.
  - Focused on assisting individuals with disabilities to obtain and maintain housing.
  - Emphasized the challenges such as credit history, lack of documentation, and financial readiness.
- Abilities Network operates statewide with a team of five specialists supporting approximately 50 individuals.

- Paul detailed their three-step service delivery model:
  - **Assessment** of housing needs and financial conditions.
  - Development of individualized housing support plans.
  - Execution and follow-through with tailored strategies.
- Shared recent success stories, such as helping clients secure housing through the DDA Rental Subsidy Program.
- Addressed questions regarding overcoming credit barriers, using resources like **My Money My Goals** and reasonable accommodations.

### ***III. Guest Speaker 2: Don Bibb***

- **Don Bibb was invited but unable to attend.**

### ***IV. DHCD Updates: Chelsea Hayman, Deputy Director – Special Populations***

- **Updates Shared:**
  - Revised guidance on the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) for HUD-funded properties.
    - New compliance documents for emergency transfers due to domestic violence.
  - DDA Rental Subsidy Program progress:
    - Eleven participants housed.
    - Eleven actively searching.
    - Two awaiting program authorization.
  - Encouraged stakeholders to direct property owner questions to DHCD for clarification.

### ***V. Mainstream Voucher Updates: Diane Dressler, Consultant***

- HUD implemented changes to mainstream voucher regulations in August:
  - Housing authorities can now create separate waitlists for mainstream vouchers.
  - No “live or work” requirement for applicants.
  - Timeframes for voucher usage extended.

- Diane highlighted areas with significant voucher availability, such as Montgomery and St. Mary's Counties.
- Emphasized the importance of understanding portability rules for voucher holders.

## ***VI. Other Member Updates***

- **Advocacy Concerns:**
  - Sheri Ewing raised concerns about local officials denying the housing crisis.
    - Suggested increased advocacy at council meetings and sharing personal stories to highlight housing issues.
    - Mentioned the need for better traction within existing housing committees.
  - Diane Dressler referenced useful data on cost burdens for renters.
- **Success Stories:**
  - Tierra Medley shared updates about legal advocacy for tenants facing unjust pest treatment fees.
    - Collaborated with Shore Legal for pro bono legal assistance.
  - Multiple DDA Rental Subsidy Program housing successes were shared, including a client moving into better housing in Silver Spring.

## ***VII. Open Forum***

- Discussed strategies to improve advocacy, including attending council meetings and collaborating with affordable housing coalitions.
- Addressed ongoing challenges such as the high cost of rent and limited affordable housing availability.

## ***VIII. Next Meeting***

- **Date:** December 12th, 2023, at 3:00 PM.
- Confirmed the date to avoid holiday conflicts.