

GOVERNING BOARD ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: RESERVE DISASTER RELIEF VOUCHERS IN CONNECTION WITH THE CITY'S SECTION 8 HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM

BACKGROUND:

Staff has received several communications from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) stating that they, along with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) staff, are working to assist families affected by the recent flooding in parts of central and eastern Iowa in finding affordable replacement housing.

HUD is asking each Housing Authority in Iowa, if their agency is in a position to assist families (i.e., can immediately process an application and is willing to allow the family to port), to respond to the following questions:

Does your agency have a waiting list preference for involuntarily displaced families? If yes, or if you currently have a short wait time for the waiting list, is your agency willing to permit portability for a family displaced by the disaster?

Although the affected area is designated as a Presidentially declared emergency, unlike the Hurricane Katrina and Rita disasters, there are no additional federal housing funds provided to assist families who are involuntarily displaced as a result of natural disasters such as floods, tornadoes or fires.

ANALYSIS:

The City's program has approximately 49 open Vouchers. Currently, 7 are waiting to be leased, 6 names have been contacted from the waiting list, and we are in the process of contacting approximately 25 additional names from that list. This would leave approximately 11 Vouchers available for the reserve. We also have a preference for displaced persons due to disasters in our current administrative plan.

Staff is recommending that the Governing Board allow the City's eleven Vouchers be reserved to assist families affected for this purpose, with the following stipulations:

- 1) A waiver will be given to HUD's one-year residency requirement to allow the Voucher holders to remain in their current jurisdiction (as needed) under the portability guidelines, with the other Housing Authority billing the City of Ames Housing Authority.
- 2) The other Housing Authority will be allowed to bill the City of Ames until such time as the voucher can be absorbed into their program allocation. Additionally, the other Housing Authority must absorb the reserved Voucher before contacting names from their waiting list to fill openings.

- 3) The eleven Vouchers can only be utilized to serve a family in good standing who was displaced from a public housing unit owned by the other Housing Authority or from a project-based housing unit that is owned or managed by the State, by a non-profit agency, or by a for-profit agency.

Each affected Housing Authority would be required to sign an Agreement of Understanding prior to the issuance of the Vouchers from the City of Ames.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. The Governing Board can approve a resolution to reserve eleven of the City's Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, with the stipulations specified above, to be made available to Housing Authorities in Iowa to assist families affected by the 2008 Floods.
2. The Governing Board can decide not to approve of a resolution to reserve eleven of the City's Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers to be made available to Housing Authorities in Iowa to assist families affected by the 2008 Floods.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Disasters know no boundaries and can affect any community at any time, and if the situation was reversed and our community and customers were affected on this level, it is hoped that we would welcome the assistance and appreciate the compassion of other Housing Authorities.

Reserving these eleven additional Vouchers will have some impact on current customers. However, we are and have been contacting names off of the waiting list since the beginning of the calendar year with only a 25% success rate (13 out 52 applications). In our efforts to be able to meet HUD's lease-up requirements by the end of the calendar year, we have begun absorbing incoming portable Vouchers. Therefore, by allowing these eleven Vouchers to be quickly assigned to eligible participants, this will greatly assist us in our efforts to reach the required lease-up rate.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative #1. This action will approve a resolution to reserve eleven of the City's Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, with stipulations, to be made available to Housing Authorities in Iowa to assist families affected by the 2008 Floods and authorize staff to notify HUD of the availability of these Vouchers.