

January 27, 2016

16-05

A workshop meeting of the Caribou City Council was held 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 27, 2016 in Council Chambers with following members present: Mayor Gary Aiken, Deputy Mayor David Martin, Philip McDonough II, Joan L. Theriault, Jody R. Smith, and Timothy C. Guerrette. Shane McDougall was absent.

Austin Bleess, City Manager and Jim Chandler, Assistant City Manager.

Department Managers: Lisa Plourde, Housing Director and Dave Ouellette, Public Works Director.

Staff: Sue Ouellette, Family Self-Sufficiency Program Coordinator.

Item #1: Discussion on Caribou Housing Agency.

Mayor Aiken opened the discussion. Jim Otis of Otis Atwell explained that HUD pays for the leasing of each unit, which is roughly \$60.00 per unit per month. Caribou Housing has 193 vouchers which calculates to approximately 2316 unit months times the \$60.00 fee but during the sequestration the fee was reduced to 67% and currently has increased to approximately 80%. These moneys are to be used to administer the program. HUD has paid \$113,000 to the Housing Agency, from this Housing has paid \$70,000 to the City to cover salaries and benefits for Section 8 staff member plus \$20,000 was paid for office expenses, training, and software maintenance.

Before becoming an arm of the City the Housing Agency originated with the City's Urban Renewal Authority.

According to Mr. Otis if the Caribou Housing Agency no longer existed then the vouchers would be moved to one or more area Housing Authorities; such as, Fort Fairfield and Presque Isle or be administered by the Maine State Housing Authority. Housing Director Plourde stressed that customer service plus two employees would be the biggest losses if the Agency closes. Ms. Plourde listed the many ways the Agency serves their clients plus other residents of Caribou.

Local housing inspections are completed by Caribou Housing staff plus they have offered inspection services, at \$75.00 per inspection, to the Maine State Housing Authority.

Council questions were answered by Director Plourde, Mr. Otis, and Sue Ouellette.

For Fiscal Year 2014, the Section Eight Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) Report gave Caribou Housing Agency a score of a 100, which means the local program is ranked as a High Performer with the quality of their paperwork.

Caribou's Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program is the only one north of Bangor and HUD is no longer approving the startup of new FSS Programs.

The Mayor's goal for this Workshop was a better of understanding as to whether the Housing Program costs the City any money.

The Agency did go in the red during the period of sequestration, but the Agency's finances have improved since then by cuts and reductions in expenses and increased level of funding from HUD. On the City balance sheet there is a Housing Reserve Account and if there is an excess income over expenses then it is moved to the Reserve and if HUD funding is not enough to cover expenses then it is moved out of the Reserve.

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Exhibit A – Caribou Housing Agency – Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program

Exhibit B – Family Self-Sufficiency Program

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

Regular City Council Meeting February 8, 2016 at 6:00 p.m.

Regular City Council Meeting March 14, 2016 at 6:00 p.m.

Jayne R. Farrin, Secretary