

* Final Draft *

**March 27, 2015 Public Hearing Comments
on the
Draft 2015-2019 HUD Consolidated Plan and 2015 Action Plan
Published for Comment March 12, 2015**

This is a summary of the public hearing held on March 27, 2015 at 12:30 p.m. in Montpelier to receive comments on the Department's Draft 2015-2019 Vermont HUD Consolidated Plan and 2015 Action Plan, which was published for comment on March 12, 2015. A revised second draft was also posted on the Department's website on March 26, 2015.

The hearing was publicized in newspapers and via email and the Agency's website.

Arthur Hamlin, Housing Program Coordinator, opened the hearing. He explained that this is the first year in a new 5-year HUD Consolidated Plan, which will be submitted to HUD online. The format looks different but the contents of the Plan are largely the same. This is the second public hearing and the purpose of today's hearing is to get comments on the Draft Plan. An earlier hearing was held to get input on developing the Plan. Following today's hearing there is a 30-day written comment period.

Arthur reviewed the funding programs covered by the Plan; CDBG, HOME, and ESG. The Plan covers the entire state of Vermont except Burlington. Total funding is approximately \$10 million annually; roughly \$6.4 million in CDBG, \$3 million in HOME, and \$640,000 in ESG. Sarah Phillips, Community Services Program Administrator, explained that Emergency Solutions Grant funds do include Burlington.

Arthur gave an overview of the public input process that has been followed including seven community outreach meetings that were held in December and January, attended by 125 people in total, an online survey completed by just under 600 people, and the Citizen Advisory Group meeting. The DHCD also conducted a statewide Housing Needs Assessment which informs the Priority Needs contained in the Plan.

Arthur described the four Priority Needs which are;

- 1) Safe, Decent and Affordable Housing
- 2) Individuals and Families Experiencing Homeless
- 3) Economic Opportunity, and
- 4) Strong Communities

In addition the Plan includes three principles which have guided Vermont's investments in housing and community development and are reaffirmed in the Plan;

- 1) Achieving the perpetual affordability of housing resources and investments
- 2) Promoting development in the state's downtowns, village centers and other areas that are consistent with the state's historic settlement pattern and "Smart Growth."

- 3) Tying homeless assistance to permanent housing through systems, practices and initiatives informed by research, data and proven practice.

The following public comments were received:

Margaret Murray, Montpelier

Margaret Murray submitted written comments in the form of a letter and made the following comments:

- Apologized that she had not read the Draft Plan.
- Said she appreciated that the Department took her suggestion from last year and made the legal notice larger
- Commented that too much of what the state does happens behind closed doors, mentioning that there are 236 exemptions to the public records act as an example
- \$10 million is a large amount of money for Vermont and she would like as much public input as humanly possible
- Commented that average citizens would generally have difficulty attending a meeting on a Friday afternoon in a State office building
- Mentioned she was the only citizen who attended last year's hearings
- In response to Deputy Commissioner Hollar asking if a downtown location would be more convenient, stated that parking is not available in Montpelier. Suggested that Barre may be a more convenient location not far from Montpelier
- Commented that she has noticed that public participation generally had decreased over time and although it's not necessarily deliberate, somehow government is turning people off