



Resident Advisory Board

November 13th 2024

HASCO Office

The RAB meeting took place in the Grand Canyon meeting room at HASCO's office. 8 participants in the Housing Choice Voucher program attended with 7 HASCO staff members also in attendance. Jodie Halsne, Tenant Based Assistance Director presented and Sara O'Neill, TBA Administrative Specialist took notes.

The meeting began at 12:31pm. Attendees were provided with printouts going over the topics to be discussed during the presentation. Before beginning, people introduced themselves. The presentation was partially made up of going over a review of goals from our previous five years along with presenting the goals prepared through the input from participants and HASCO staff.

At the midway point of the presentation, a program participant, J■■■■ K■■■ asked about what happens to the voucher in the case of the head of household passing away.

Jodie explained the process of how a voucher transfers to the next eligible adult within the household and that if that is not possible, the voucher will go back on to be used by another eligible family.

At the end of the presentation of old goals and new ones, participants gave their input and asked their own questions.

Using HASCO's resources to increase affordable housing options:

M■■■■ R■■■■: How do I mentor someone so they know how to apply for a voucher?

Note was made about this suggestion. Other participants seemed interested in helping out new voucher holders in navigating the system.

JK noted that there is a lot of housing construction happening around Snohomish County and asked if there was a required percentage that must be 'affordable.'

Ways Home. Paths Forward.





Jodie Halsne informed the participants about LIHTC and what that means. Tax credits that go to the owner/builder because a certain number of units are set aside in an otherwise fair market complex as affordable.

Jenisa Story, Chief Operating Officer, also provided some additional information about the fact that some cities can set their own requirement of a certain percentage of required affordable units.

S [REDACTED] M [REDACTED] spoke about giving back as a client of HASCO's.

- She stated that she believed it is the participants' duty to help. Below are some suggestions she offered:
 - o Participants could do workshops to help out other participants on the program.
 - o People who have vouchers can help other voucher holders in their search for housing, i.e. noting landlords that are resistant to voucher holders, guiding other voucher holders toward more affordable places with the voucher.
 - o Participants should share their stories to help spread information and clear disinformation about the truth of the Section 8/HCV programs to both other clients and the community at large.
 - o Help promote awareness of HASCO and what all the organization does.
 - o Fundraising events for HASCO
 - o Wants to give back
 - o Where SM lives, she finds that the landlords are not giving correct information about vouchers out to their tenants.
 - o Advocate for the people that don't understand the complicated information of the vouchers to landlords.
 - o SM nominated herself as someone to help in this process.

In response to the comment about donating to HASCO, Jodie Halsne clarified that HASCO cannot accept donations, however it would be helpful if these efforts were directed toward HASCO partners.

She also reminded participants that they can report landlords for discrimination with local fair housing office, but also reminding them to reach out to HASCO and the Landlord Engagement Specialist about landlords giving out incorrect information.

JK – Education!!

- She expressed interest in information sessions
 - o Multiple topics
- Recommends talking about homeless veterans in efforts to educate the public about housing assistance.

Ways Home. Paths Forward.





M■■ R■■ – In regards to the new administration next year, the participant expressed her concerns about housing assistance in general going forward.

- She is worried about the continued assistance of the voucher, that it won't be guaranteed.
- She plans for her son's future, i.e. what will happen for him after she passes away.
- The participant also stressed how important transparency from HASCO is
 - o Rent portion calculations
 - o More transparency will assuage more general worries of the participant population

Jodie Halsne – To answer MR's questions about the future of housing assistance Jodie said HASCO isn't sure the sorts of changes the new administration will implement.

- HUD has continued to fund the vouchers
- Going off the new administration's previous four years they may expect some cuts

Jenisa Story

- Jenisa has been in housing for over twenty years. She commented about the many administrations she has seen come and go.
- There may be many federal changes and changes to funding, however, she has never been worried that the Section 8/HCV program would be cut.
- With cuts there may be less assistance for more/new people on the program.
- Hope is that impacts would not be felt by participants directly.

There was a question about the budget in relation to what was being discussed during the RAB meeting. Jodie clarified that HASCO's budget does not have any connection to the Agency Plan and the RAB meeting.

SM – mentioned that for people concerned about governmental/funding changes, several organizations have generic letter templates available for people to help them in reaching out to their representatives.

To continue the conversation going over future goals, Jodie steered the topic to education. What do voucher participants want for education.

- Invites to more informative events like this
- SAFMR information available on the website
- Possible information session topics:
 - o Rights and responsibilities (tenants as well as landlords)
 - o Expenses (medical and how they impact rent portions)
 - o How the program works
 - o An education night

Ways Home. Paths Forward.





- Does HASCO do anything like Legislative Days (group to travel down to Olympia to speak with state reps)
 - o HASCO does not, but that could be something the agency looks into.

The next slide was on the topic of advocacy (how HASCO can advocate, and who for?)

- SM suggested advocacy on refugees' behalf.
 - o In her experience, the immigrant/refugee experience is tricky to navigate
 - o There is the misconception that if people are not citizens and they move in with family members who are, the entire household will lose the voucher.
 - o Jodie clarified the misinformation that people have been told by explaining the process of having a 'mixed family' with housing assistance, as well as how prorated assistance works.

B [REDACTED] S [REDACTED] spoke about having difficulty reaching her specialist.

- Jodie confirmed that to reach the TBA department, participants should go through housing@hasco.org and that even if you have one specialist for your Annual Review one year, you won't necessarily have the same person next year.

B [REDACTED] I [REDACTED] reminded HASCO that if they proceeded with these educational events, not everyone has access to a vehicle/reliable transportation.

- It was suggested that the information sessions be hosted online via Zoom or Teams. Notes about the information session will be posted to HASCO's website.

MR – Portal/HASCO website are very helpful for getting information. Looking forward to AR portal for document submission.

JK – Reminder to remember the seniors with this shift to more technological focus for document submission.

After questions were done, HASCO staff and participants chatted. The meeting officially finished at 2 pm.

Ways Home. Paths Forward.





Resident Advisory Board

November 14th 2024

Microsoft Teams

The RAB meeting took place in Microsoft Teams as an offering for participants who could not attend the in-person meeting. 1 Housing Choice Voucher participant, K [REDACTED] G [REDACTED], attended. Jodie Halsne, Tenant Based Assistance Director presented and Sara O'Neill, TBA Administrative Specialist took notes

The meeting began at 5:05 pm. The presentation was the same one as the day before. KG didn't have questions through the presentation. When it was opened up for feedback to the new goals KG spoke about her agreement with the set goals.

- Her frustrations have been trying to get in contact with specialists as she feels like it is a circle, getting contradictory information from different sources
- Jodie acknowledged the need for more staff in the communication group.

KG spoke about her experience moving into a new place with her voucher. She said that the landlords are duping residents. They are duped because the units are advertised as clean and good, only for residents to move in and find they are not

- Jodie explained the abatement process and that if there are maintenance concerns that are not being addressed by the property owner in a timely manner, participants should contact HASCO.
- KG was pleased to learn this information and suggested that HASCO make this information more well known by participants.

To that point, previous comments about interest in information sessions were brought up.

- KG was interested in the information sessions, she suggested a session about communication and how best to reach HASCO

KG also emphasized the importance of destigmatizing vouchers and voucher holders. Being in the position to need a voucher could happen to anyone. 'We want to help! Having the voucher means it is more likely to be productive.'

The meeting ended at 5:47 pm

Ways Home. Paths Forward.





2025-2026 Agency Plan

Resident Advisory Board Meeting

Agenda

- Overview of plan and HASCO's housing programs
- Understanding RAB's role
- Recap of HASCO's progress on past goals and progress
- Draft of HASCO's future goals

Housekeeping

- Please use the raise hand function for questions. Any other questions, you can make note of them for yourself and save them for later.
- The chat function is disabled for this meeting because they can cause distraction for the presenter.
- If you have any questions you do not feel comfortable asking aloud, you can send them to Sara O'Neill at sconeill@hasco.org

What is the Agency Plan?

- HUD requirement: A 5-year plan.
 - Our current five-year plan ends this year, 2024.
 - We are finalizing the plan for the next five years.
- Updated Annually
- Process includes participant and community feedback

RAB's Role?

- Review the draft plan
 - HASCO's goals and progress made
 - Goals for the next five years
- Provide feedback and comments on the voucher programs
- Learn more about HASCO and the programs we have

2024-2025 Schedule

- Input Gathering Events with participants at HASCO office (and virtually)
– July 2024
- Input Gathering Event with HASCO staff – October 2024
- November 13th and November 14th RAB meetings
- HASCO Board approved draft plan – December 17th, 2024
- 45 days of resident and public comment
- HASCO Board approves final plan – March 18th, 2025

What We Do

- We serve families throughout Snohomish County with 4,317 vouchers.
- Subsidize Housing Choice Vouchers & Project-Based Vouchers
 - Special Programs for Homeless, Elderly, Veterans, People with disabilities, Youth aging out of foster care

Key Goals and Updates – Increase HASCO's Pool of Housing Vouchers

- 29 more vouchers in use since December 2023, with 81 new voucher holders searching for a unit and 139 voucher holders moving.
- 25 additional VASH vouchers became effective in May
- HASCO applied for 50 additional FUP vouchers in 2024.

Key Goals and Updates – Ensure housing opportunities , promote stabilities, strengthen community, and affirmatively further fair housing

- VAWA policies are being updated
- HASCO has reviewed 183 RA and 30 VAWA requests as of 10/30/2024
- Housing navigation and supportive services offered to 217 HCV participants.
- Offering services at 2 senior/disabled communities.

Key Goals and Updates – Work with local community to determine needs and solutions

- In Fall 2024, HASCO sponsored the first Oasis Game in North America with the Elos Institute
- HASCO coordinates with Snohomish County and the cities
- We serve on the Partnership to End Homelessness board

Key Goals and Updates – Reduce The HCV program's environmental impact

- HASCO is working with our software vendor to building and testing the online portal for use on annual and interim certifications.
- Communication through online channels has continued through 2024.
- Along with mass communication with participants through email notices and social media

Key Goals and Updates – Provide service aligned with HASCO's Core Values

- The Housing Team continued hiring and training new staff
- Department structure has stabilized with work being done in teams
- HASCO's Core Values are a guide for staff to act with high integrity.
- In 2024, HASCO earned high performer status in our audits.

NEW Agency Plan Goals starting 2025

- New goals were drafted through multiple input gathering events with participants and staff starting Summer 2024 through Fall 2024
- Great goals come from valuable participant and partner insight
- To those who participated in these events this year, thank you!

Key Goals: Use HASCO resources to increase affordable housing options

- Apply for additional vouchers as they become available
- Increase affordable housing stock

Key Goals: Advocate for affordable housing and services in Snohomish County

- Advocate for additional housing assistance for the growing senior population
- Advocate for homeownership assistance in the greater community
- Collaborate with partners to increase affordable housing stock
- Advocate for expansion of funding for affordable housing construction

Key Goals: Inform the community on the needs of families who are homeless or rent-burdened

Educate voucher holders, landlords, staff, and the public. Examples include:

- a. Providing opportunities for voucher holders to share their stories
- b. Educate groups on:
 - a. rights and responsibilities
 - b. changes and updates to the programs
 - c. access to technology and using the new portals
 - d. Source of Income discrimination
- Destigmatize vouchers

Key Goals: Inform the community on the needs of families who are homeless or rent-burdened cont.

Promote statistics that support housing initiatives. Examples include:

- a. Over half of the community is rent-burdened
- b. Seniors are a growing population who are increasingly rent-burdened
- c. Rent increases are outpacing wage increases



Thank you for attending!

Questions and Discussion