

## **PUBLIC HEARING SESSION - JANUARY 13, 1993**

The public hearing session of the Ann Arbor City Council was called to order at 7:04 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chamber by Mayor Elizabeth S. Brater.

### **ROLL CALL OF COUNCIL**

**PRESENT:** Councilmembers Larry Hunter, Tobi Hanna-Davies, Peter Fink, Robert C. Grady, Nelson K. Meade, Kurt Zimmer, Peter Nicolas, Thais Anne Peterson, Robert Eckstein, Mayor Elizabeth S. Brater, 10.

**ABSENT :** Councilmember Kirk D. Dodge, 1.

### **PUBLIC HEARING**

#### **HOUSING COMMISSION ISSUES**

A public hearing was conducted on Ann Arbor Housing Commission issues. Notice of public hearing was published January 9, 1993.

The following persons appeared:

Tony Taylor, 727 Miller Ave., spoke in support of the HOPE program sponsored by HUD, which offers public housing residents opportunities to be homeowners and the City an opportunity to increase its stock of low-income housing. Mr. Taylor explained that, under the program, public housing units would be sold to eligible residents and HUD would provide money for replacement housing. He suggested that a committee be established to review the HOPE application.

Mary Ann Hinton, 3453 Platt Rd., stated that public housing in Ann Arbor could be successful with the proper management and with a Housing Commission composed of public housing representatives who understand the needs of the residents. Ms. Hinton spoke in favor of converting to a tenant management system and requested reinstatement of former Housing Commission Director Conrad Benson who has the experience to help in the transition.

Gayland Thompson, 1701 Green Rd., presented the demands of the Unity Tenant Management Corporation which she stated represent the minimal conditions to develop a genuine working relationship between public housing residents, City Council and the Housing Commission. The demands include appointment of public housing tenants to the Housing Commission, Council support of tenant management, and reinstatement of Conrad Benson as Housing Commission Director. (Complete list of demands on file in the City Clerk's Office)

Robert Morgan, Baker Commons resident, expressed support of former Housing Commission Director Conrad Benson who was responsive to tenant maintenance problems and knowledgeable of public housing issues. Mr. Morgan requested that Council immediately reinstate Mr. Benson as Ann Arbor Housing Commission Director.

Dan Kaplan, former Assistant to Housing Commission Director Conrad Benson, expressed concern with the injustices surrounding Mr. Benson's firing. He praised Mr. Benson as an extraordinary administrator who treated people with respect and raised public housing and Section 8 subsidies to their full potential in Ann Arbor. Mr. Kaplan stated that the conflict between the Housing Commission and Mr. Benson is a political one involving the issue of tenant management and ownership. He requested that the Commissioners make their views clear on the issue and that those Commissioners not in agreement with City Council's position be replaced.

Kathy Baldwin, representing Community Action Network, reported that her service agency seeks funding from various sources but does not ask for funding from the Housing Commission. Ms. Baldwin stated that she has had a good relationship with the Housing Commissioners and that they have been very supportive of her program.

Nancy Moustakis, 609 Miller Ave., Executive Director of Community Action Network, stated that Ann Arbor needs a housing director who can be compassionate to the residents and effective as an administrator. She requested that the process for selecting such a director, as well as for appointing Housing Commissioners, be open and efficient and include the residents. Ms. Moustakis expressed support for making tenant management training available to all public housing residents.

Jeri Schneider, 520 N. Main St., expressed concern that Council is not

committed to creating more affordable housing in the City and that Council is doing the community a disservice by saying it supports the concerns of low-income residents when its actions show otherwise.

Larry Fox, 530 S. State St., expressed concern with the lack of communication, trust, and a working relationship between public housing tenants and the Housing Commissioners. Mr. Fox stated that the Commissioners should be removed for not effectively communicating with the public housing residents, and that the conflict has gone on too long for the Commissioners to regain the tenants' trust.

Carol Rees, 1602 Granger Ave., stated that she helped establish the Ann Arbor Housing Commission over 20 years ago and expressed concern with its recent problems. Ms. Rees requested that the groups involved not allow personal conflicts to get in the way of obtaining the larger goal of providing what is needed for the people in Ann Arbor.

Galivia Anderson, 1506 Broadway St., spoke in support of former Housing Commission Director Conrad Benson, and expressed concern with senior citizens in public housing who have no one to care for them.

A Miller Manor resident spoke in support of former Housing Commission Director Conrad Benson who she believes provided more help and was more cooperative to the residents of Miller Manor than any other director.

Mary Franklin stated that former Housing Commission Director Conrad Benson maintained a good relationship with public housing tenants, but expressed concern with problems involving his administration of public money which resulted in a loss of funds earmarked for other purposes. Ms. Franklin requested that all parties involved try to get past the issue of personalities and look toward the goals of diversity in housing and affordable housing in Ann Arbor.

Valarie Ackerman, 2227 Yorktown Dr., representing the Green Party, expressed support for tenant management of public housing, and requested that allegations against former Housing Commission Director Benson be made public if they exist. Ms. Ackerman stated that she believes the real issue involves the conflict between Mr. Benson who supports tenant management and the "liberals" who feel that public housing residents should be taken care of.

Sheila Tyler, 1711 Green Rd., presented a video tape entitled "Fired Up"

showing the positive effects of resident management when public housing residents organize and take control of their own lives. In contrast, Ms. Tyler presented another video showing the conflict between the Ann Arbor Housing Commissioners and public housing residents.

Joseph Summers, 1411 South Blvd., stated that the reasons given for firing the Housing Commission Director did not seem justified. He expressed concern that the legacy of not letting low-income people have control over institutions that affect their lives may be involved in this case. Mr. Summers stated that the residents of public housing are looking for a clear commitment to working towards tenants having more control over their living situations.

Laurie Young, 1506 Broadway St., spoke in opposition to the dismissal of Housing Commission Director Conrad Benson who she believes was compassionate, supportive, and willing to work with the tenants to provide solutions to ongoing problems. Ms. Young expressed concern that the Housing Commissioners have a poor assessment of public housing residents as people who are not capable of taking care of themselves.

Avon Cowens, 1514 White St., objected that public housing tenants have to come begging to City Council to reinstate Housing Commission Director Benson. Ms. Cowens stated that Mr. Benson treated public housing residents as human beings and was highly respected. She requested that the residents be able to make their own decisions in this matter and spoke in favor of converting to tenant management immediately.

There being no one else to speak the Chair declared the hearing closed.

The Chair declared a recess at 8:32 p.m.

The Chair again called the meeting to order at 8:39 p.m.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before Council, it was moved by Councilmember Hunter that the meeting be adjourned.

On a voice vote the Chair declared the motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

W. Northcross  
Clerk of the Council

Janet L. Chapin  
Recording Secretary



## **WORKING SESSION - JANUARY 13, 1993**

The working session of the Ann Arbor City Council was called to order at 8:41 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chamber by Mayor Elizabeth S. Brater.

### **ROLL CALL OF COUNCIL**

**PRESENT:** Councilmembers Larry Hunter, Tobi Hanna-Davies, Peter Fink, Robert C. Grady, Nelson K. Meade, Kurt Zimmer, Peter Nicolas, Thais Anne Peterson, Robert Eckstein, Mayor Elizabeth S. Brater, 10.

**ABSENT :** Councilmember Kirk D. Dodge, 1.

### **HOUSING COMMISSION ISSUES**

A working session concerning Ann Arbor Housing Commission issues was held with a representative from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Acting Director of the Housing Commission and members of the Ann Arbor Housing Commission.

Councilmember Hunter introduced Preston Pace, Chief of Housing Programs for the Detroit Office of HUD, who answered questions from Council concerning the Hope Program as well as rules and guidelines concerning other HUD programs.

Mr. Pace briefed Council on the status of the City's HUD application to build public housing units on 23 scattered sites. He reported that HUD has formally approved 15 of the 23 sites, and that the South Main and Platt Road sites are still under review due to pending environmental assessments. Mr. Pace stated that the HUD field office recommends not beginning construction until all 23 sites have been approved.

Acting Housing Commission Director William Hampton and Housing Commissioners Susan Greenberg, Gloria Harrison and Walt Scheider answered questions from Councilmembers concerning the dismissal of Housing Commission Director Conrad Benson and related issues.

UNITY representatives answered questions from Councilmembers and expressed their belief that the mediation between the tenants and Housing Commissioners will not be successful unless everyone is clear on Unity's demands, which were read and distributed during the public hearing. (Unity Tenant Management Corporation Demands on file in the

City Clerk's Office)

Mayor Brater expressed Council's support for the tenant-management approach to public housing and commended public housing representatives for their hard work in seeking HUD training and taking leadership roles. Ms. Brater stated that she is looking forward to continuing to work with the public housing tenants and to improve communications with everyone involved.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before Council, it was moved by Councilmember Hunter that the meeting be adjourned.

On a voice vote the Chair declared the motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 12:34 a.m.

W. Northcross  
Clerk of the Council

Janet L. Chapin  
Recording Secretary