

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

RESOLUTION NO. 02-105

Approving the Plan Developed by Commissioner Lisa Naito, Sheriff's Office, Department of Community Justice-Corrections and Corrections Health, Health Department, Department of County Human Services and the Office of School and Community Partnerships to Expend Strategic Investment Program Community Services Fees Collected by the County for Special Needs Housing Purposes

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Finds:

- a. On December 12, 1998 the Board of County Commissioners, by Resolution No. 98-199, dedicated ten percent of the Strategic Investment Program Community Services Fees (SIPCSF) proceeds for special needs housing uses and authorized the Division of Community Programs and Partnerships to recommend a plan to the Board for use of the monies collected.
- b. Commissioner Lisa Naito convened a workgroup that has developed a plan to provide housing assistance for people with mental illness leaving jail and at risk of homelessness.
- c. The Office of School and Community Partnerships as the successor agency to the Division of Community Programs and Partnerships is presenting the plan in collaboration with Commissioner Naito in accordance with Resolution No. 98-199.
- d. The attached plan proposes a three-year demonstration term for the housing assistance program expending \$75,000 annually of SIPCSF.
- e. Providing housing assistance to mentally ill persons leaving jail and at risk of homelessness is a Priority 1 objective of the *Consolidated Plan 2000-2005*, adopted by Multnomah County and other local governments as a housing and community planning document.
- f. Commissioner Naito and Judge Julie Frantz have chaired a working group which created the report titled: *Recommendations for Improving Options and Outcomes for Persons with Mental Illness in Multnomah County's Criminal Justice System*. This report suggests ways in which the mental health and criminal justice systems could work more closely together to lower the numbers of people with mental illness entering jail and improving services to those already jailed. Providing opportunities for stable housing and support services to mentally ill people leaving jail are recurring findings in the report. The attached post-release housing plan is designed to address some of the immediate housing and service needs for persons with mental illness as addressed the report.

- g. Persons with mental illness in the criminal justice system often have as their only source of income SSI or SSD benefits acquired from the federal government through the Social Security administration. These benefits are suspended while incarcerated. It takes four to six weeks or longer for the social security benefits to be reinstated upon release from jail. During the time after release from jail and without a source of income or ability to attain or retain housing the person with mental illness is at grave risk of homelessness and renewed criminal activity. The post release housing assistance voucher is intended to bridge the gap between the lost SSI benefits and their resumption.

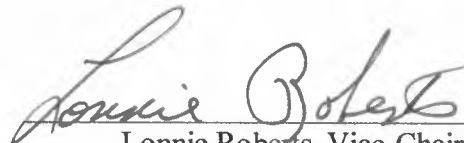
The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Resolves:

1. The plan attached as Exhibit A for expending Strategic Investment Program Community Services Fees (SIPCSF) monies to provide housing assistance for mentally ill persons leaving jail is approved.
2. The Chair is authorized to coordinate and implement the plan through the cooperating County agencies.

ADOPTED this 25th day of July, 2002.



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON


Lonnie Roberts, Vice-Chair

REVIEWED:

THOMAS SPONSLER, COUNTY ATTORNEY
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

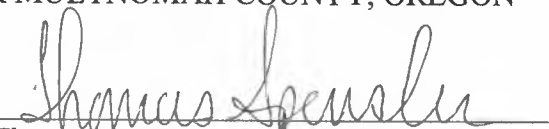
By 
Thomas Sponsler, County Attorney

EXHIBIT A

Commissioner Lisa Naito Post Release Housing Assistance Plan to Expend SIP Community Service Fees Special Needs Housing Fund

History and Funding

In order to increase corporate investment and stimulate local economic growth, Multnomah County entered into agreements with Fujitsu and LSI Logic, two large companies with plants located in east Multnomah County. The City of Gresham is also party to the agreements. The County agreed to reduce the property tax burden of these two companies to induce plant expansion and create more living wage jobs. Payments were to be made to the County for certain targeted purposes in lieu of the companies making full-bore property tax payments. The payments made to the County are used predominantly for workforce development programs: such as job training, job retention and job development. A portion of the payments was slated to be used for housing purposes. This program of trading property tax reductions to increase corporate investment and job availability coupled with targeted payments to local governments is called the Strategic Investment Program (SIP).

A one time only housing fund of one million dollars was generated from SIP for the purpose of increasing the inventory of housing units available to low income persons and families. These housing development funds were fully expended in 1998. Nine varied housing projects were assisted helping to create or preserve 350 affordable units. An ongoing annual payment to the County in the amount equal to 25% of each year's abated property taxes, not to exceed \$2,000,000.00, made by the participating companies was also part of the SIP agreement. This annual payment is known as the SIP Community Services Fee. Fujitsu no longer contributes to the Community Service Fee but LSI Logic is committed to the annual payments through 2012. On December 3, 1998, the Board by Resolution No. 98-199 reserved ten percent of the annual Community Services Fee for special needs housing use.

A distribution formula for the SIP Community Services Fee apportions 53% of the annual payment for use by the County and 47% for use by the City of Gresham. Another \$100,000.00 is taken annually for administration of the SIP. This formula has yielded a \$46,000.00 payment available for special needs housing use in the July 2002 – June 2003 fiscal year. Another \$208,000.00 has accrued in the special needs housing fund. After July 1st of this year a total of \$254,000.00 will be available for special needs housing use. As property tax assessments are gradually trending upwards, it may be conservatively calculated that another \$45,000-50,000 should be added to the fund each fiscal year until 2012.

It is the responsibility of the Office of School and Community Partnerships to make recommendations to the Board regarding the use of the SIP special needs housing fund. That is the purpose of this proposal. When the SIP special needs housing fund was originally championed by former Commissioner Sharron Kelley, her intent was to make emergency housing assistance available to people leaving jail with mental illness, substance abuse or other disabling problems. Commissioner Lisa Naito has revived and expanded the idea of providing

housing vouchers or rent assistance to disabled persons, including those with mental illness, being released from jail and at acute risk of homelessness or re-offending without immediate stable housing and support services. This proposal attempts to outline how such a program can work. One of the goals of this proposal is to implement the jail release rent assistance vouchers for disabled people demonstration program using existing monitoring and transition processes with as little added administrative cost as possible. This piggybacking on existing systems serves the more important purpose of trying to provide a stable housing environment and services to as many disabled and vulnerable people leaving jail as possible.

Need & Eligible Clients

Jails are often the de facto provider of crisis mental health services in Multnomah County. As recently as a June 12th article in the *Oregonian*, a national report by the Council of State Governments, a group of mental health and criminal justice policy-makers stated: "In fact, a large number of people with mental illness in prison (and especially in jail) have been incarcerated because they displayed in public the symptoms of untreated mental illness." An overburdened state hospital and limited community based mental health treatment options have left many people without adequate or effective alternatives for mental health care. A person suffering a psychotic break accompanied by menacing or other criminal behaviors, without effective crisis treatment options becomes, wanted or unwanted, the responsibility of the criminal justice system.

Commissioner Naito and Judge Julie Frantz have chaired a working group which created the report: *Recommendations for Improving Options and Outcomes for Persons with Mental Illness in Multnomah County's Criminal Justice System*. This report suggests ways in which the mental health and criminal justice systems could work together more closely to lower the numbers of people with mental illness entering jail and improving services for those already jailed. Though this report does not make specific suggestions about post-release options for housing and services, providing stable housing and support services is a recurrent theme. In the *Recommendations for Pre-Booking Options*, section 3.a suggests: *Assure adequate housing, food, employment and access to family supports and services*. In the *Recommendations for Improving Services from the State Hospital*, section 3 states as a goal to: *Develop further options for stable housing for persons with a mental illness, which include monitoring and wrap-around services*. The availability of housing support and access to treatment and medications for people with mental illnesses leaving jail is very limited. This proposal for post release housing assistance intends to provide a measure of immediate stability for people with mental illness most at risk of homelessness.

Often mentally ill people with profound mental illness have acquired SSI or SSD benefits from the federal government through the Social Security administration. People suffering from mental illness and receiving SSI or SSD benefits are severely impaired, cannot work and seldom have any other source of income. These benefits are suspended during a stay in jail. It takes four to six weeks or longer for the social security benefits to be reinstated upon release from jail. During the time after release from jail and without a source of income or ability to attain or retain housing the person with mental illness is at grave risk of homelessness and renewed criminal activity. The post release housing assistance voucher is intended to bridge the gap between the lost SSI benefits and their resumption. (The number of people in jail every year in this position

has been estimated to be 250-300. This number is more than enough to exhaust the proposed SIP post release housing assistance available funds.) These people with mental illness and lost SSI or SSD benefits will be the first priority clients for the post release housing assistance program. Some people with mental retardation or developmental disabilities may also qualify for the post release assistance but the preponderant use will be for persons with mental illness.

Providing housing for low-income individuals with mental illness is an identified priority for Multnomah County and the region. In the *Consolidated Plan 2000-2005*, the strategic housing planning document for Multnomah County, the City of Portland and the City of Gresham, housing for low income people with special needs is listed in the Priority 1 class of critical housing needs. This means that public funding available for housing purposes should be first directed towards meeting these Priority 1 needs. Led by Chair Diane Linn, the County has undertaken a thorough going reform of the system of providing mental health services. The SIP post release housing assistance voucher proposal addresses urgent needs in the County and requires cooperation between the corrections and mental health systems to be effective. Making housing and mental health services available to vulnerable, mentally ill people leaving jail meets any comparative need test of local and national social problems.

Program Operation

Inmates leaving the State penitentiary are provided housing stabilization assistance for the difficult leap back into the social mainstream. People leaving County jail receive no such assistance. The dislocation and disorder in the life of a mentally ill person incarcerated in County jail can be tremendous. The loss of SSI or SSD benefits while incarcerated leaves the mentally ill person no safety net to rely on upon release. The intent of the SIP post release housing assistance program is to provide another tool for the County staff and systems presently trying to assist disabled people leaving jail have a chance at stability. The SIP post release housing assistance is intended to be used as a last resort after all other avenues for providing housing upon release have been exhausted.

The gatekeepers to determine eligibility for the SIP housing would be the Discharge Planners at the Inverness jail and the downtown Multnomah County Detention Center (MCDC). There is one Discharge Planner for each of these facilities. Though they are available to the entire jail population for release planning, they work mostly with disabled people and people with medical problems needing immediate attention upon release. The Discharge planners are able to identify mentally ill people who have lost their SSI benefits. Presently, the Discharge Planners provide mentally ill people with letters for the Social Security Administration attesting to the fact that they have left jail and are again eligible for SSI or SSD benefits. It is also the intent of the SIP post release housing assistance to give discretion to the Discharge Planners in identifying potential recipients. Some mentally ill people in jail with Access I or II diagnoses may not have ever had SSI benefits or been rejected for such benefits in the past. However, they meet the disability test and would still be at extreme risk of homelessness and re-offending upon release. Their only source of income upon release might be general assistance. The post release program would rely upon the judgment of the Discharge planners to determine the severity of the need of mentally ill persons needing housing assistance.

The SIP post release program contemplates using two agencies currently providing transition services to mentally ill people leaving jail. The Transition Services Unit within the Department of Community Justice assists people leaving jail under court supervision. Pre-trial releases from jail of persons with mental illness are typically supervised by the Sheriff's Office. A close collaboration between the Discharge planners and these two agencies in evaluating housing needs and options for jail release clients is essential. The housing needs of persons identified as eligible for SIP housing assistance would be reviewed. The SIP housing assistance program envisions vouchering people in motels, providing rental assistance in supervised buildings owned by non-profits such as Central City Concern or Cascadia Behavioral HealthCare or other supervised group-living facilities. Autonomy and client choice in housing is an important goal and guaranteed by law. However, some of the disabled persons eligible for the SIP housing assistance will be sex offenders. The Discharge Planners, Sheriff's Office and the Transition Services staff should review appropriate and safe housing sites for the differing needs of the people using the SIP housing assistance.

It is envisioned that the Sheriff's Office and Transition Services team will request and administer the SIP housing assistance in conjunction with the Office of School and Community Partnerships Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse presently fields requests from a variety of social service and medical agencies providing motel vouchers and rent assistance for homeless persons and families. County Alcohol and Drug services uses the Clearinghouse to voucher clients recently out of jail and enrolled in their treatment programs into motels in a manner much like that planned for the SIP post release housing assistance program. After discussions with the Discharge planners, the Sheriff's Office and the Transition Services staff could make voucher or rental assistance requests of the Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse would track personal and demographic information about each client and would be the repository of budget information for the SIP housing assistance funds. By using the Clearinghouse to manage the budget and personal data of the SIP funds the staff at the Sheriff's Office and Transition Services could always know the amount of funds available for housing assistance and would keep the SIP funds discrete and separate from other funds used to assist people leaving jail. It will be especially important in the initial implementation of the SIP housing assistance funds to determine how often the funds are accessed and how quickly the fund is depleted.

The SIP post release housing assistance program would be initiated as a demonstration program funded for three years at \$75,000.00 per year. Each client would be eligible for up to twelve hundred dollars (\$1,200.00) of housing assistance. This is predicated on providing two months of stable housing during which SSD benefits could be restored. It is hoped that many clients would only use the first month's \$600 housing assistance payment. But again, the SIP housing assistance funds are intended to help disabled people avoid homelessness, so discretion would be given to the Sheriff's Office and Transition Services unit to offer a third month of housing assistance should no other housing opportunity be accessible. With these funding limitations it is projected that between 60-75 persons will be assisted through the program each year. The amount of the annual funding during three year demonstration term could be raised, but the overall fund is limited and such initial funds use would cause a precipitous drop in annual funding for the fourth and future years should the program be continued. The funding could remain at a constant \$75,000.00 per year for at least another two years after the demonstration term has expired.

Attaching clinical mental health services and other support services to the SIP post release client's housing assistance is crucial in achieving any real housing and life stability. It is hoped that the housing assistance provided through the SIP fund could be made contingent upon the person released from jail agreeing to follow a treatment plan and take prescribed medications. It is also hoped that offering the second month's \$600.00 worth of SIP housing assistance will be an inducement to continue treatment. Mental Health case workers would need to help determine, in consultation with the Sheriff's Office and Transition Service workers, whether the SIP housing benefit should be extended. (It should be noted that there will probably be some clients using the SIP housing assistance benefit who need more intensive support than is currently available to even continue taking medications, so the inducement of another month of housing costs paid would be for those persons would be irrelevant.) In all the discussions of this proposal, it is clear that connection with mental health and other support services is never irrelevant and is always critical. The people leaving jail under supervision and receiving the SIP housing assistance would hopefully be a priority to receive a mental health parole officer. The SIP housing fund recipients should also be priority clients for the targeted case management teams being developed by the County's mental health services staff (as well as pre and post adjudication community supervision agencies).

Conclusion & Questions

The SIP post release program could be implemented within a short time frame. Administrative cost burdens appear minimal except perhaps for the OSCP Clearinghouse.

This proposal is meant as an outline for a housing assistance program. The intent of the program is to be another tool available to the existing systems providing housing assistance to disabled people leaving jail. Encouraging collaboration between the various agencies charged with assisting mentally ill people leaving jail is an important byproduct of this effort. Significant unanswered questions remain to be addressed. Some of the following listed questions have come up through the discussions preliminary to writing this proposal. Many could be addressed as the program is implemented and begins to provide housing assistance.

- What outcomes should be used to denote client success? Is no return to jail for a period of year a "success"? Should the clients housing stability after the SIP housing assistance expires be measured? How and by whom?
- Can the monies paid for the benefit of the clients by the County during the period after release from jail before SSI or SSD benefits are reinstated be reimbursable by the Social Security Administration?
- Could the program be used to retain housing lost to people during incarceration?