

For Property Owners and Managers participating in the Chicago Housing Authority's Housing Choice Voucher Program



## MEET THE NEW CHA BOARD CHAIRMAN

On Nov. 22, 2011, Mayor Rahm Emanuel appointed Zaldwaynaka "Z" Scott to the CHA Board of Commissioners succeeding James Reynolds, Jr.

Z. Scott is currently a Partner at Kaye Scholar LLP. Previously, she was the Executive Inspector General for the Office of the Governor of Illinois, where she established and managed an internal compliance and investigative agency for Illinois government and Illinois public universities and worked closely with the state's internal auditor and the Illinois Auditor General in matters related to integrity of state government functions.

Previously, she was a federal criminal prosecutor with the United States Attorney's Office from 1987-2003, where she held various management positions, including chief of the General Crimes Section.

Before joining the U.S. Attorney's Office, she served in the Office of the Corporation Counsel for the City of Chicago. Scott was named to Illinois Super Lawyers in 2009-2011.

## HCV PROGRAM OWNER PORTAL

### Coming Soon!

CHA is launching a new online tool that will keep you connected with the HCV Program 24/7.

- View/Print/Save/Export your HAP statements and inspection results
- List your vacant units
- Download Program forms/materials
- Keep up to date with what's new
- And much more!

Watch your e-mail for details on how to sign up!

## INSIDE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

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## UPDATE: CHA CHANGES OWNER ELIGIBILITY SCREENING REQUIREMENTS

To make the leasing process more convenient for Property Owners and more efficient for all parties involved, CHA has removed the credit check requirement and several options that verified proof of ownership, including the need for a mortgage statement.

Therefore, beginning May 18, 2012, CHA is examining the following criteria as part of the screening process:

- Property Taxes
- Foreclosures
- Criminal Activity
- Proof of Ownership – *new* acceptable documents listed below:
  - Recorded Deed from the Cook County Recorder of Deeds ([www.ccrd.info](http://www.ccrd.info)), or
  - Court Order of Assignment (signed by a judge)

Please make sure to share this information with your Agents and/or Property Managers as it will affect any new lease-ups.

## YOUR PROPERTY, YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

**Owner:** **noun** /ōnər/ – a legal possessor of a property or business.

As a Property Owner participating in CHA's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program, you receive many benefits including reliable rent and free inspections. However, this partnership also comes with the responsibility of maintaining your property (inside and out) in accordance with HUD's Housing Quality Standards (HQS) and enforcing your lease. This means that you must:

### Understand Basic Tenant Rights and Enforce Your Lease Accordingly

Make sure you are familiar with Chicago's Residential Landlord and Tenant Ordinance (CRLTO) and Fair Housing laws, both of which are outlined in your Property Owner Reference Manual. In addition, it is in your best interest to collect a security deposit, conduct a walk-thru inspection with your tenant during move-in and move-out and communicate with CHA regarding any lease violations or tenant-caused damages to your unit that are in excess of normal wear and tear. And, don't forget...you must provide documented evidence and photos of any damages. Without this information, CHA will not be able to take action against the family, including terminating their participation in the Program.

### Adhere to Safety Codes

Make sure to follow not only state and city guidelines, but all aspects of CHA's inspection process as well. Save money and time by keeping yourself up-to-date with all Housing Quality Standards. Make sure you have a copy of the latest HQS Inspection Guidebook, which is available online at [www.thecha.org/forms](http://www.thecha.org/forms).

**Note:** If CHA is informed that you have severe building code violations on record for a property on the HCV Program, any new Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA) forms that you submit may be denied. In addition, as outlined in the Program's Administrative Plan (located online at [www.thecha.org/adminplan](http://www.thecha.org/adminplan)), CHA may fail the property for HQS violations based on the city of Chicago's information, which may result in the abatement of your HAP.

### Perform Necessary Repairs and Maintenance

This includes exterminating regularly and checking to make sure all smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors are in working order.

### Pay the Bills Related to Your Property

This includes the mortgage, any Owner-paid utilities, insurance premiums, etc.

### Maintain Insurance

Obtaining certain types of insurance that protect you against damages from fires, floods or even a 'slip and fall' claim will help preserve your investment in the long run. In addition, consider getting an umbrella insurance policy that provides extra liability coverage and can protect you from lawsuits that may not be covered by your current policy.

In the end, maintaining your property in accordance with standards set forth by CHA and HUD (as you agreed to do when you signed the HAP Contract) will help you preserve the value of your investment.

Don't have a copy of the latest Property Owner Reference Manual or HQS Inspection Guidebook? Has it been over 12 months since you last attended an Owner Information Briefing? Sign up for one of our upcoming sessions to learn what's new and receive both books. Visit [www.chaownerbriefings.eventbrite.com](http://www.chaownerbriefings.eventbrite.com).

## REGISTRATION OPEN FOR CHA'S 5TH ANNUAL OWNER SYMPOSIUM

If you've attended any of CHA's previous Symposiums, you know that this is the can't-miss educational event of the season for Chicago Property Owners, Property Managers and Real Estate Investors.

### Are you ready to advance your property management skills and become an empowered Owner?

Register today and join us on Saturday, Sept. 29, 2012 at Navy Pier to:

- √ Gain the insight you need to increase the value of your property and grow your business.
- √ Hear from recognized experts in the housing industry on topics such as:
  - property management
  - evictions
  - inspections
  - rent determination
  - pest control
  - energy efficiency
  - property taxes
  - and more...
- √ Find out what's new in HCV Program operations.
- √ See how you can stay in touch instantly with CHA via social media.
- √ Discover new and exciting solutions from national and local vendors.

**Don't delay!** Visit [www.CHAOwnerSymposium.org](http://www.CHAOwnerSymposium.org) to register today!

## REDUCE YOUR ENERGY USE AND INCREASE YOUR SAVINGS

Having an eco-friendly business or taking steps to be more “green” is becoming more of a standard practice where everyone can benefit in some way or another (Property Owners/Managers, tenants, businesses, neighborhoods, the environment, etc.).

Did you know that you can cut your utility costs by simply replacing your standard incandescent bulbs with fluorescent light bulbs? Not only do fluorescents use less electricity, they also produce much less heat, which can decrease your cooling costs, all while producing the same amount of light. For example, just by replacing one standard 60 watt bulb with one fluorescent 15 watt bulb and using it throughout its life time (10,000 hours), you could save about \$70 (based on an average price for electricity in Chicago of \$.153/kwh).<sup>\*</sup> That’s just for one bulb. Imagine how much you could save if you replaced them all?

In addition, by adopting more green initiatives around your property, you can make your unit(s) stand out from the rest and educate others (tenants and neighbors) on the benefits of being environmentally conscious. And, as more and more renters are looking for eco-friendly units due to the cost savings they can realize, you may even increase your chances of attracting tenants.

Here are a few ways that you and your tenants can be more “green”, together:

- Pick up litter on the sidewalk, street, beach or riverbank to help keep the environment free of contaminants and rodents.
- Start composting your food scraps and plant waste from the garden. This is a good way to cut down on the amount of trash that goes into the landfills. As a bonus, compost can help your garden bloom by enriching the soil. Maybe start a friendly competition between neighbors to see whose garden can grow the best vegetables and flowers this summer!
- Recycle, recycle and recycle some more. Start a recycling program at a neighborhood school, office or the park district. Extending your campaign of going green with your tenants can help build bigger, safer, greener communities for everyone to enjoy.

### Need more help with going green?

Find out more information and join the movement today at [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov).

<sup>\*</sup>Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov))

## REMINDER: ZERO TOLERANCE FOR BRIBES AND SIDE PAYMENTS

Integrity and fairness are essential principles of the HCV Program and should be reflected in all activities. Each Property Owner/Manager, Participant and CHA staff member have a responsibility to ensure that the Program is free from corruption. Therefore, it is unlawful for anyone involved with the HCV Program to use (or appear to use) their position for personal gain. Doing so will result in the termination of their HAP Contract, subsidy or employment with CHA.

Some examples of actions that are prohibited include:

- Offering or accepting bribes
- Offering payment or gifts for quick inspections or re-inspections
- Collecting side payments (payments outside of the agreed upon rent) from tenant(s)
- Passing a unit that fails an HQS inspection in exchange for any gift, payment or favor
- Improperly approving any Program transaction in exchange for any gift, payment or favor

### Recognition for a Job Well Done

If you would like to recognize an employee or thank them for a job well done, please write a letter, send an e-mail or make a phone call to their supervisor.

### Reporting Suspected Unethical Behavior

If you witness a colleague, Participant or CHA employee asking for money, gifts or favors in exchange for HCV Program-related services, please call the CHA Fraud Hotline immediately at **800-533-0441** so that your complaint can be handled promptly and confidentially.



**Join the Conversation!**

Like us on Facebook  
[www.facebook.com/CHAonFB](http://www.facebook.com/CHAonFB)

Follow us on Twitter  
[www.twitter.com/thechatweets](http://www.twitter.com/thechatweets)

Receive important information and status updates from CHA. Connect with others that are interested in the housing industry. Provide input on the HCV Program or other CHA initiatives. **Start talking today.**

## BOOST YOUR PROPERTY'S CURB APPEAL

Contributed by Taft West, Director of Property Management Training for Community Investment Corporation (CIC). For more information about CIC, visit their website at [www.cicchicago.com](http://www.cicchicago.com).

First the bad news: if you neglect landscaping, your property's curb appeal will suffer for the rest of the year.

Now the good news: landscaping doesn't have to be nearly the amount of work that it seems if you'll invest time in caring for the exterior flowers, trees, shrubs and lawn. This care will result in terrific curb appeal, helping to retain current tenants and to attract prospects to your property throughout the year. To get you started, below is a list of some suggested tasks.

1. Clear away any dead plants or trees. Trim overgrown hedges and mow the lawn. Turn the soil in existing flowerbeds. Wash down the driveway and remove any stains, if necessary. As you survey your lawn in spring, see if there are any matted patches, in which the grass blades are all stuck together. This can be caused by a disease known as "snow mold." New grass may have difficulty penetrating these matted patches. But a light raking will be sufficient to solve this problem.
2. Consider power washing the exterior of your property. You can rent a power washer at your local home improvement store for around \$50. This will freshen up your existing exterior. Do repaint the trim, however. Consider a new color, one that will brighten up the existing color.
3. If your front door is in bad shape, replace it. If it's functional but dull, repaint or add new stain. If your door is fine, but your entryway is dull, consider adding ornamentation. Clean up or replace your porch light. Place two large planters or pots to either side of your doorway.
4. For your flowerbeds, choose a mix of annuals and perennials. Plant the perennials farther apart and mix in the annuals between them. Your perennials will continue to bloom for a few years, but as their name implies, the annuals will need replacing each year. The annuals will keep your garden looking fresh and the perennials will save you money.
5. Kill any weeds in the lawn and reseed. Like you, your lawn and the soil under it need to breathe. The process of lawn aeration can be as simple as poking holes in the soil throughout the lawn. You should also rake deeply, rather than just skimming the leaves off the top of the lawn.

## WORKING TOGETHER FOR SAFER COMMUNITIES

Crime prevention may oftentimes seem like an uphill battle. However, if everyone commits to a common goal and works together to achieve it, the time and effort invested can produce significant benefits.

There are a number of ways that you can help to discourage criminal activity throughout your neighborhood—at minimal cost. Below are some ideas to get you started.

### Lighting

Enhance or improve lighting by replacing bulbs and/or installing additional fixtures.

### Security

Install new door locks and/or add dead bolts.

### Communication

- Keep in touch with your neighbors and authorities regarding suspicious activity
- Visit your property(ies) and tenant(s) regularly

### Community Involvement

- Team up with other organizations in your community including local libraries, youth centers and park districts to discuss crime prevention strategies and approaches
- Attend CAPS meetings and events hosted by your Alderman
- Organize a block club with your tenants and neighbors
- Arrange after-school mentoring programs or neighborhood beautification and food drives to keep youth off the streets and show a positive presence in your community

The list is endless. All of these activities will be evidence for a stronger, more alert neighborhood to any motivated offender.

Together with your tenants, neighbors and community organizations, you can play a part in helping CHA *build stronger communities, one neighbor at a time.*

## OWNER NEWS

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