

I MINA'TRENTAI KUATTRO NA LIHESLATURAN GUÅHAN

Informational Briefing

REPORT	STANDING COMMITTEE / SENATOR	DATE	DATE FILED	NOTES
Informational Briefing	Committee on Housing, Utilities, Public Safety, and Homeland Security	4/3/17 2:00 p.m.	5/4/17 12:07 a.m.	Committee Report on Informational Briefing with Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority: Status of Housing Programs.




OFFICE OF SENATOR TELENA CRUZ NELSON

CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, UTILITIES, PUBLIC SAFETY & HOMELAND SECURITY
I MINA'TRENTAI KUÁTTRO NA LIHESLATURAN GUAHAN | 34th GUAM LEGISLATURE

May 2, 2017

The Honorable Benjamin J.F. Cruz
Speaker
I Mina'trentai Kuáttro na Liheslaturan Guáhan
163 Chalan Santo Papa
Hagátña, Guam 96910

2017 MAY -4 PM 12: 07

VIA: The Honorable Michael F.Q. San Nicolas 
Chairperson, Committee of Rules

RE: Committee Report on Informational Briefing of the Guam Housing and Urban Renewal
Authority: Status of Housing Programs

Dear Speaker Cruz:

Transmitted herewith is the Committee Report on the Informational Briefing of the Guam
Housing and Urban Renewal Authority: Status of Housing Programs by the Committee on
Housing, Utilities, Public Safety, and Homeland Security.

Respectfully,

Senator Telena Cruz Nelson
Committee Chairwoman





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CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, UTILITIES, PUBLIC SAFETY & HOMELAND SECURITY
I MINA'TRENTAI KUÁTTRO NA LIHESLATURAN GUAHAN | 34th GUAM LEGISLATURE

COMMITTEE REPORT

Informational Briefing of the

Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority:

Status of Housing Programs

Policy and Procedures for review of new employees and board members to ensure there are no conflicts of interest



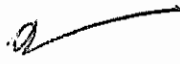
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I MINA'TRENTAI KUÁTTO NA LIHESLATURAN GUAHAN | 34th GUAM LEGISLATURE

March 24, 2017

MEMORANDUM

To: All Senators, Stakeholders and Media

From: Senator Telena Cruz Nelson, *Chairperson* 

Subject: **First Notice of Informational Briefing: Monday, April 3, 2017, 2:00 P.M.**

Please be advised that the Committee on Housing, Utilities, Public Safety & Homeland Security will be conducting an Informational Briefing on **Monday, April 3, 2017**. This meeting will take place in the Public Hearing Room of *I Liheslaturan Guahan*. The agenda is as follows:

2:00 P.M. Informational Briefing

Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority:

- **Status of housing programs**
- **Policy and procedures for review of new employees and board members to ensure there are no conflict of interests**

Individuals who wish to submit written testimony may address Senator Telena Cruz Nelson, and send it to: via email: senatortcnelson@guamlegislature.org, mail or hand deliver to: the Guam Congress Building, 163 Chalan Santo Papa *Hagåtña*, Guam 96910.

Individuals who may require assistance are asked to contact the office of Senator Telena Cruz Nelson at 989-4678/7689 no later than 48 hours prior to the hearing.

Si Y'u'os Ma'ase'!

Cc: Sgt-at-Arms
Protocol/AV
MIS

GUAM CONGRESS BLDG. 163 CHALAN SANTO PAPA HAGÁTÑA, GUAM 96910

Tel: (671) 989-7696 | Email: senatortcnelson@guamlegislature.org



First Notice of Informational Briefing: Monday, April 3, 2017, 2:00 P.M.

Telena Cruz Nelson <senatortcnelson@guamlegislature.org>
To: phnotice@guamlegislature.org

Fri, Mar 24, 2017 at 4:59 PM

March 24, 2017

MEMORANDUM

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Senator Telena Cruz Nelson

Committee on Housing, Utilities, Public Safety & Homeland Security

I Mina'trentai Kuâttro na Liheslaturan Guåhan

34th Guam Legislature

Guam Congress Building, 163 Chalan Santo Papa, Hagåtña, Guam 96910

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 **2017.03.24_TCN First Notice of GHURA Informational Briefing 2017.04.03.pdf**
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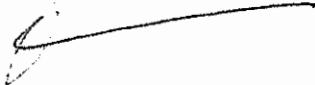
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I MINA'TRENTAI KUÁTTRO NA LIHESLATURAN GUAHAN | 34th GUAM LEGISLATURE

March 29, 2017

MEMORANDUM

To: All Senators, Stakeholders and Media

From: Senator Telena Cruz Nelson, *Chairperson* 

Subject: **Second Notice of Informational Briefing: Monday, April 3, 2017, 2:00 P.M.**

Please be advised that the Committee on Housing, Utilities, Public Safety & Homeland Security will be conducting an Informational Briefing on **Monday, April 3, 2017**. This meeting will take place in the Public Hearing Room of *I Liheslaturan Guahan*. The agenda is as follows:

2:00 P.M. Informational Briefing

Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority:

- **Status of housing programs**
- **Policy and procedures for review of new employees and board members to ensure there are no conflict of interests**

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Si Yu'os Ma'ase'!

Cc: Sgt-at-Arms
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Second Notice of Informational Briefing: Monday, April 3, 2017, 2:00 P.M.

Telena Cruz Nelson <senatortcnelson@guamlegislature.org>

Wed, Mar 29, 2017 at 1:14 PM

To: Michael Duenas <mjduenas@ghura.org>, pleonguerrero@ghura.org, mtaitano@ghura.org,
phnotice@guamlegislature.org

Cc: Joe San Agustin <protocol@guamlegislature.org>, sgtarms@guamlegislature.org, mis@guamlegislature.org

March 29, 2017

MEMORANDUM

To: All Senators, Stakeholders and Media

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2:00 P.M. Informational Briefing

Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority:

- Status of housing programs
- Policy and procedures for review of new employees and board members to ensure there are no conflict of interests

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Si Yu'os Ma'ase'!

--

Senator Telena Cruz Nelson

Committee on Housing, Utilities, Public Safety & Homeland Security

I Mina'trentai Kuåttro na Liheslaturan Guåhan

34th Guam Legislature

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 **ghura info briefing 2nd notice.pdf**
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OFFICE OF SENATOR TELENA CRUZ NELSON

CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, UTILITIES, PUBLIC SAFETY & HOMELAND SECURITY
I MINA'TRENTAI KUATTRO NA LIHESLATURAN GUAHAN | 34th GUAM LEGISLATURE

Informational Briefing
Monday, April 3, 2017, 2:00 p.m.
Public Hearing Room, Guam Congress Building

AGENDA

- 1) Informational Briefing from Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority:
 - Status of housing programs
 - Policy and procedures for review of new employees and board members to ensure there are no conflict of interests

I Mina'trentai Kuáttro Na Liheslaturan Guáhan
 Committee on Housing, Utilities, Public Safety, and Homeland Security
 Office of Senator Telena Cruz Nelson
 Informational Briefing Sign-in Sheet

Monday, April 3, 2017 • 2:00 p.m. • Public Hearing Room
Informational Briefing, Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority:

Status of housing programs and policy and procedures for review of new employees and board members to ensure there are no conflict of interests

NAME	AGENCY OR ORGANIZATION (IF ANY)	CONTACT NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS
Pedro A. LEON GUARAZOS	GHURA	472-1442	plleon@ghura.org
Mike Duenas	GHURA	477-0502	mjduenas@ghura.org



GHURA

Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority
Aturidat Ginima' Yan Rinueban Siudat Guahan
117 Bien Venida Avenue, Sinajana, GU 96910
Phone: (671) 477-9851 · Fax: (671) 300-7565 · TTY: (671) 472-3701



Legislative Informational Briefing
Monday, April 3, 2017
2:00 p.m.

"Strengthening Families and Building Communities One Project At A Time."

I. HOUSING PROGRAMS:

A. SECTION 8 HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER (HCV) PROGRAM

Section 8 is a program that provides housing vouchers and certificates to eligible very low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. The *vouchers and certificates* are a form of *monetary rental assistance* that helps very low-income families, rent affordable housing of their choice from landlords on Guam.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers Federal aid to GHURA to provide rental assistance for very low-income residents to make renting housing in the community affordable.

Total families	Working families	% Working families	Average Income
2,314	1,686	73%	\$16,243

WAITLIST

2017	TOTAL	REGULAR VOUCHERS	NON ELDERLY DISABLE VOUCHERS	FAMILY UNIFICATION
Mar 31	1426	1363	43	20



Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program

Families who receive assistance under the HCV and Public Housing programs may be eligible to participate in the HCV/PH-FSS program.

The FSS program services, involves linking available resources that exist in the community that would assist families achieve economic self-sufficiency; these services may include, but are not limited to:

- child care
 - transportation
 - education opportunities
 - job training and employment counseling
 - substance/alcohol abuse treatment or counseling
 - household skill training
 - homeownership counseling
- Since the inception of the program in 1997, **79** participants have graduated from the FSS Program.
 - In 2016 there was 1 graduate totaling \$1,543.07 in escrow.
 - In 2017 there are 2 graduates totaling \$16,695.46 in escrow.
 - As of **March 31, 2017** there are **120** participants
 - 99 Section HCV participants
 - 21 Public Housing participants
 - Currently, **41%** have escrow account balances. Escrows earned under the program have been used towards a down payment/closing costs on a home, home appliances and furnishings, automobile down payment, and advancing educational goals.

B. PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAM

Public housing is an affordable rental-housing program for eligible low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Public housing comes in all sizes and types, from two-bedroom to five-bedroom single-family units and one-bedroom units for the elderly. GHURA has 750 public housing units located throughout Guam.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers Federal aid to GHURA to manage the housing for low-income residents at rents they can afford.

PUBLIC HOUSING

Total families	Working families	% Working	Avg Income
715	455	67%	\$16,432

C. **Guma Trankilidat, known as the Guam Elderly Project**, is financed through the Rural Housing Service, Section 515 New Construction Loan Program.

This program provides housing to very low-income elderly and persons with disabilities. There are 49 one-bedroom units. Project-based rental assistance is provided to its residents.

- **100% occupied**
- **40 on the waitlist**

D. Community Planning and Development (CPD)

Program	Activity	Project	Recipient-Operator / Community Partner	Units
CDBG	Affordable Rental Housing	Renaissance Rental Housing	GHURA	20 homes
	Public Facilities	GPD Central Precinct	Guam Police Department	1 facility
	Public Facilities	Umatac Baseball Field	Office of the Umatac Mayor	1 facility
	Public Facilities	Astumbo Gym, Tier 2 Shelter	Office of the Dededo Mayor	1 facility
	Public Services	Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)	The Salvation Army Corps Guam	n/a
	Public Services	Lighthouse Recovery Center	The Salvation Army Corps Guam	30 beds
	Public Services	Family Services Center	The Salvation Army Corps Guam	n/a
HOME	Homeowner Assistance	GHURA Homeowner Rehabilitation Loan Program	GHURA	
	Homebuyer Assistance	Renewal Affordable Homes	GHURA	5
	Homebuyer Assistance	Acquisition/Rehabilitation	GHURA	5
ESG	Homeless Assistance	Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Assistance Program	The Salvation Army Corps Guam	

Program	Activity	Project	Recipient-Operator / Community Partner	Units
LIHTC	Rental Housing Tax Credits	Villa Del Mar, Toto	Villa Del Mar, LLC	50
	Rental Housing Tax Credits	Summer Town Estates, III	Summer Town Estates, LLC	66

Acronym Key:

CDBG = Community Development Block Grant Program (U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development)

HOME = Home Investment Partnership Grant Program (U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development)

ESG = Emergency Solutions Grant Program (U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development)

LIHTC = Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program (U.S. Internal Revenue Service)

1. \$2.5M in tax credits awarded

**Elderly Housing
GHURA and LIHTC**

Heads of Household Age 62 and Older Demographic		
LIHTC Projects	HOH ≥ 62	Total HH
Ironwood Estates	6	27
Ironwood Manor	4	13
Ironwood Glen	6	17
Ironwood Heights I	4	7
Ironwood Heights II	3	11
Summer Town Estates	186	317
Summer Town Estates II	7	20
Summer Home	4	8
Summer Green	2	11
Total	222	431

GHURA	HOH ≥ 62	Total HH
Housing Choice Voucher Program/Section 8	346	28
Public Housing AMP 1	18	5
Public Housing AMP 2	11	1
Public Housing AMP 3	37	9
Public Housing AMP 4	51	5
Guma Trankilidat	48	1
Total	511	49

Consolidated	HOH ≥ 62	Total HH
LIHTC Projects	222	431
GHURA	511	49
Total	733	480

Notes:

TBD = To be determined. Data forthcoming.

HOH = Head of Household

HH = Household

AMP = Asset Managed Property

LIHTC = Low Income Housing Tax Credit

Not immediately impacted



OFFICE OF SENATOR TELENA CRUZ NELSON

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I MINA'TRENTAI KUATTRO NA LIHESLATURAN GUAHAN | 34th GUAM LEGISLATURE

COMMITTEE REPORT DIGEST

I. OVERVIEW

The Committee on Housing, Utilities, Public Safety & Homeland Security held an Informational Briefing with the Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority (GHURA) on Monday, April 3, 2017 at 2:00 p.m. in *Liheslatura's* Public Hearing Room on the status of housing programs and policy and procedures for review of new employees and board members to ensure there are no conflicts of interest.

Public Notice Requirements

Public Hearing notices were disseminated via e-mail to all senators and all main media broadcasting outlets on March 24, 2017 (5-Day Notice), and again on March 29, 2017 (48-Hour Notice).

Senators present

Senator Telena Cruz Nelson, Chairperson
Vice Speaker Therese M. Terlaje, Vice-Chairperson
Senator Regine Biscoe Lee, Member
Senator Thomas Ada
Senator Frank Blas Aguon, Jr.

Panel:

Mr. Michael Duenas, Executive Director, Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority (GHURA)
Mr. Pedro Leon Guerrero, Jr., Deputy Director, Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority (GHURA)

Signed-in:

Mr. Michael Duenas, Executive Director, Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority (GHURA)
Mr. Pedro Leon Guerrero, Jr., Deputy Director, Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority (GHURA)

II. SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY & DISCUSSION

The Informational Briefing was Called-to-Order at 2:08 PM.

Senator Telena Cruz Nelson

In light of the current indictment against Mr. Mark Smith, I reached out to Mr. Duenas and Mr. Leon Guerrero to discuss what impacts this indictment has had on GHURA and what measures are put in place to ensure that the safety and concerns of the organization is well protected. Thank you very much for agreeing to this informational briefing. The people of Guam need to know how they will be impacted. So Mr. Duenas or Mr. Leon Guerrero, if you could please give a brief overview on GHURA and some of the programs they operate. We will then move

GUAM CONGRESS BLDG. 163 CHALAN SANTO PAPA HAGATÑA, GUAM 96910

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forward to discuss the nature of the indictment, not really focusing on the criminal aspect, but more on the impact that it has had on the agency and what is being put in place for the future to ensure this does not happen again.

Michael Duenas

Good afternoon, Madame Chair. Thank you for this opportunity to assure the community that the programs run by GHURA are intact and are being implemented. Our Section 8 Program continues to assist over 2,000 families—our latest report indicates we are assisting over 2,314 families. 73% of those families are working families, so it is not families taking advantage of the Section 8 Program and looking for a free ride. Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of those families are working families. As you know, we launched a lottery approach to our waitlist earlier this year. We had selected over 1800 families who had registered for the lottery. Of those 1800 families, 1271 completed the registration process successfully. The current number on the waitlist is 1,426 families. Those include the families that were already on the waitlist before we launched the lottery process. Most of these families are applying for the regular voucher, then we have 2 special-purpose vouchers that they also applied for. Those include the non-elderly disabled vouchers, otherwise known as mainstream vouchers, for adults with disabilities and the Family Unification Program, which is targeted at families that are under services of child welfare or other services provided by the Department of Public Health. There are 20 families on that waitlist. Another feature in the Section 8 Program is the Family Self-Sufficiency Program. This is a grant that we receive from HUDD to help families improve their income and eventually get off of the welfare programs. This is a 5-year contract where individuals identify goals that they want to pursue. Since 1997, 79 participants have successfully completed the program. Last year, one individual graduated. This year, 2 individuals graduated and have received escrow funds, totaling \$16,000 for both families. Part of the attraction for the program is that as their salaries increase, so do their fees. What we do with the raise, however, is we take that and put it into an escrow account. At the end of the 5-year contract, these families have an income to fall onto for support. Our Public Housing Program, as of today, we have 715 families. 67% of those families are working families. Again, I want to counter the perception that most of these families just sit back and receive assistance. More than half of the families in Public Housing are working. We continue to support and encourage those families. We also administer the Guma Trankilidat Program. Those are 49 units in Tumon for the elderly. They are 100% occupied at this point and we have 40 families on the waitlist. We receive many grants from HUDD under the Community Development Division of HUDD which includes the Community Development Block Program. We also receive the Home Investment Partnership Program, which brings in \$750,000 a year. This Program is to be eliminated under the new Presidency. The President also proposes to decrease amount of funding for the Section 8 Program and Public Housing Program. We are waiting until May 1st for more details of the President's budget and to understand how much of an impact the reduction towards the Section 8 and Housing Programs will be. Right now, there are no firm numbers. Lastly, we administer the Low-income Housing Tax Program, which is a program under the Internal Revenue Service.

Senator Telena Nelson

I'll open up the questioning for my colleagues. Vice-Speaker? Senator Tom Ada?

Senator Tom Ada

I have a question regarding Guma Trankilidat. If I recall over a decade ago, there were several attempts to lease that out and take the lease income from that to possibly build another similar facility further inland, but there always seems to be a lot of pushback. Was that pushback from GHURA? Where is that pushback coming from?

Michael Duenas

I think Senator Aguon says it is from him.

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Senator Frank Aguon, Jr.

I am raising my hand, good Senator Tom because I introduced legislation that was supported by members of the legislature that saved that particular property specifically for our manamko' and the argument originated from many of the tenants and their family members. The manamko' there insisted that they wanted to remain there and have access to the beach. But from an economic and business perspective, you may think otherwise, but for me, it's about honoring our manamko'.

Michael Duenas

That's what we're looking at, Senator. I think one of the residents best put it to me when I was talking to him. He said he had just moved in last month and he expects to die there. So they do take a very strong about what's happening around them, and we have to respect that.

Frank Aguon, Jr.

I appreciate the accommodations for the manamko, Mr. Duenas, but the highest best use should have the interest of the Agency.

Michael Duenas

It is the public perception we are focused on.

Senator Telena Nelson

Thank you, Mr. Duenas. I'm sure we can talk more offline about those perspectives. I'd like to ask some questions in regards to the recent indictment. First, is the federal government seeking forfeiture or any federal housing funds?

Michael Duenas

At this point, before the criminal investigation was initiated, we were in discussion with HUDD on how to reimburse the Section 8 Program for the lease payments. That discussion was suspended when the criminal investigation began.

Senator Telena Nelson

So is the federal government seeking forfeiture?

Michael Duenas

I am not familiar with what they are doing with the investigation.

Senator Telena Nelson

So the Ija Subdivision hasn't approached you, questioning the funds from the federal government?

Michael Duenas

When the investigation was launched, we were in negotiation as to how to approach that best. As I said, those discussions were suspended when the investigation launched.

Senator Telena Nelson

So, if it was in fact, an avenue that you were looking at, how is the funds mentioned earlier not immediately impacting the Programs? Do you have money that is already there to supplement this?

Michael Duenas

Senator, we continue to receive the payments on a monthly basis and then we, in turn, disburse it to the 1100 or so landlords. So the money continues to flow at this point.

Senator Telena Nelson

So, is the agency in need of this money?

Michael Duenas

The restitution that the U.S government is seeking is not tied into whether we need the money. The question is whether it should have been disbursed. That is where the court case is.

Senator Telena Nelson

In 2011, GHURA had received proposals from developers interested in received proposals interested in receiving 3.6 million in federal tax credits to build affordable housing. Why were credits awarded to Great Homes, LLC and Tumon Heights Tower, who were the fourth and fifth-ranked bidders? What was the reasoning behind that?

Michael Duenas

There are a couple of things wrong with your question, Senator. If this was a procurement activity, we would be awarding to the lowest bidders, not highest. This is not a procurement activity, it was a request for proposals. No funds were disbursed by GHURA. The tax credits were allocated to those developers. They had the responsibility to sell those to investors who needed the tax credits. There was an evaluation committee.

Senator Telena Nelson

Records show that Mr. Smith was employed with GHURA from April 2011 to January 2012. Why was Smith allowed to continue to receive funds as a landlord, despite the conflict of interest with his role as Legal Counsel for GHURA?

Michael Duenas

At this point, I cannot answer that. It would be improper for me to answer that.

Senator Nelson

Is there any immediate impact to the agency with the indictment of Mr. Smith?

Micahel Duenas

We will do everything we can to make sure housing assistance still continues to flow into the community.

Senator Telena Nelson

Do you have a policy in place to assure this does not happen again?

Michael Duenas

We have been refining our current policies. When we have new employees coming in, we screen whether they are affiliated with GHURA, or any of their family members.

Senator Telena Nelson

Is this process enough to protect the agency?

Michael Duenas
Yes. There is a form they sign.

Senator Telen Nelson
Thank you, Mr. Duenas. Do my colleagues have any questions?

Senator Frank Aguon, Jr.
Thank you, Mr. Duenas. I'm surprised you don't have an attorney with you. What you're saying is you already have a policy in place to protect the agency from this situation happening again. Is this correct?

Michael Duenas
That is correct.

Senator Nelson
I am very grateful for your continued support and cooperation. I would like to thank the GHURA Officials and for taking the time to participate in the Informational Briefing this Committee has organized. A committee report will be drafted and filed as a public document with the Committee on Rules. Thank you and have a good evening.

The Informational Briefing was adjourned at 2:52 p.m.

III. FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- GHURA assures the public that there are policies set in place to prevent future conflicts of interest.
- Indictment of Mark Smith has not impacted GHURA directly.



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I MINA'TRENTAI KUATTRO NA LIHESLATURAN GUAHAN | 34th GUAM LEGISLATURE

For Immediate Release
March 24, 2017

SENATOR NELSON PLANS INFORMATIONAL BRIEFING WITH GHURA TO PROTECT PUBLIC HOUSING FROM FINANCIAL CORRUPTION

(*Hagåtña*, Guam) Senator Telena Cruz Nelson, Chairperson of the Committee on Housing, Utilities, Public Safety and Homeland Security will host an Informational Briefing with the Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority (GHURA) to discuss the safeguards in place that would ensure possible money laundering, theft and wire fraud charges would not occur again within the agency in light of recent indictments with a former GHURA official.

“The recent federal charges are very alarming,” Senator Nelson stated. “During the upcoming briefing, I would like to hear from GHURA officials on what housing programs for our people have been impacted because of these recent charges and how the agency has tightened its review of new employees and board members to ensure there are no conflict of interests.”

The Informational Briefing with GHURA will take place on Monday, April 3, 2017, 2:00 p.m. in the Public Hearing Room of the Guam Congress Building.

###

For more information, please contact the Office of Senator Telena Cruz Nelson at 989-7696.

GHURA aims to issue first Section 8 housing vouchers this month



[About the Lottery \(in English\)](#)

[in Chamorro: Põn Loteva](#) | [in Chuukese: Põnuseva Lottery](#) | [in Tagalog: Tanglek sa Lottery](#)

LOTTERY DRAWING RESULTS

Congratulations! These are the computer generated Lottery Results for the January 9, 2017, entries which have been randomly drawn.

Posted: Mar 22, 2017 3:52 PM

Updated: Mar 29, 2017 3:52 PM

If you're one of 1,200 applicants who registered for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program in January, GHURA will soon be getting a hold of you as it begins to issue out vouchers.

For the first time in years, GHURA opened the waitlist for the program, attracting thousands. Executive Director Michael Duenas says GHURA will start asking applicants to submit documents to verify eligibility.

"The development of the Section 8 waitlist through the lottery process is moving right along. We are in the final stages of cleaning out the waitlist by eliminating things like duplicate submissions, incomplete submissions. We hope to begin notifying families as early as next week, based on the time and date they completed the application," Duenas explained.

About 1,800 people were randomly selected, but the list has dwindled down to roughly 1,200 due to issues with their applications. While they won't be issued all at once, GHURA expects to issue its first vouchers this month. Families will then have 60 days to find a unit and complete the process.

GHURA warns staffers about conflicts of interest

Posted: Mar 27, 2017 5:53 PM

Updated: Apr 03, 2017 5:53 PM

By Krystal Paco [CONNECT](#)

All GHURA employee have been put on notice: any potential conflicts of interest must be brought before management immediately. The advisory follows the unsealing of years worth of information about a federal probe that resulted in an indictment against former GHURA legal counsel, Attorney Mark Smith.

Smith along with Glenn Wong face almost 60 counts of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, money laundering, and theft of government property, to name a few.

Both were scheduled to appear in federal court this morning.

"This has been an issue that surfaced over 6 years ago. This indictment is I hope open of the initial stages to bring closure to this issue - we're also hoping that the issue of reimbursement is something that will be addressed as part of the court case," said Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority Executive Director Michael Duenas. He's responding to the indictment against former legal counsel, Mark Smith and co-defendant Glenn Wong. Following years of federal probe, their indictment was unsealed in the District Court of Guam last week. At issue is Smith's dual role as former GHURA legal counsel as well as a landlord under the Section 8 program.

According to court documents, Smith and Wong conspired to conceal Smith's apparent conflict of interest. Smith transferred his Dededo, Mongmong-Toto-Maite, Tamuning, and Agat properties to Wong who allegedly received the Housing Assistance Payments and would send the funds back to Smith by transferring and withdrawing funds, writing checks to pay off Smith's credit cards, and making loan payments for Smith. A total of 281-thousand dollars was deposited into Wong's account and later paid out to Smith.

Smith appeared in court on Monday to answer to the charges, but will likely return later this week. Smith's attorney David Lujan filed a stipulated motion to continue today's hearing to Tuesday or Wednesday "in the interests of justice, to enable the Defendants to have effective assistance of counsels, and to ensure that the Defendants Constitutional rights are preserved." Wong is represented by attorney James Maher who also signed the motion.

Meanwhile, Duenas says they're tightening up policy, which he plans to present at an informational briefing for the agency. Housing Chairperson Senator Telena Cruz Nelson called for the briefing in light of the federal case. Duenas says all employees and future members appointed to the board are subject to the vetting process.

"We vet them. We ask for the names of their immediate family members and we run that through our database of over 1,100 landlords to ensure there's no conflict of interest. And we have recently issued out an advisory to our employees basically saying if you are aware of any of your immediate family members are participating as landlords in the Section 8 program, please bring that to our attention," said Duenas.

The hearing is set for Monday April 3 at 2pm at the Guam Congress Building.


Monday, 27 March 2017


Arraignment date moved for former GHURA attorney Mark Smith

Written by Donna De Jesus (/local/author/10387-donna-de-jesus)





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 text=Arraignment%20date%20moved%20for%20former%20GHURA%20attorney%20Mark%20Smith&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.pacificnewscenter.com%2Flocal%2F13193&title=Arraignment%20date%20moved%20for%20former%20GHURA%20attorney%20Mark%20Smith

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Federal Judge Joaquin Manibusan granted a motion for continued arraignment.

Guam - Former GHURA legal counsel Atty. Mark Smith, through his attorney David Lujan, requested to push back his arraignment date in order to "have effective assistance of counsels."

Only Smith was present in District Court today when Judge Joaquin Manibusan granted the motion to continue arraignment.

Smith had been under investigation for years, accused of conspiring with his close friend, Glenn Wong to defraud the federal government out of section 8 program funds while he served as GHURA's legal counsel. The indictment states that Smith transferred ownership of his section 8 properties to Wong, which were funneled back to Smith by way of various payments made by Wong to Smith's loans, credit cards and other bills.

In response to this, Senator Telena Nelson will be holding an informational briefing next week to tackle how GHURA officials have tightened reviews for potential conflicts of interest. Sen. Nelson's hearing is set for Monday, April 3 at 2 p.m. at the Guam Congress Building.

Smith and Wong's new arraignment date is scheduled for March 29 at 9:30 a.m.

Senator Nelson plans info briefing with GHURA



Posted: Mar 31, 2017 12:59 PM
Updated: Apr 07, 2017 12:59 PM

By Nick Delgado [CONNECT](#)

In light of the federal indictment of its former legal counsel, Senator Telena Cruz Nelson will be holding an information briefing with GHURA. As oversight chairperson she wants to discuss the safeguards in place that would ensure possible money laundering, theft and wire fraud charges won't occur.

Senator Nelson wants to know if any housing programs were impacted and how the agency has tightened its review of its new employees and board members.

The hearing is set for Monday April 3 at 2pm at the Guam Congress Building.



COMMITTEE ON RULES

Senator Michael F.Q. San Nicolas, *Chairman*
I Mina'Trentai Kuåtto na Liheslaturan Guåhan • 34th Guam Legislature



COMMITTEE REPORT CHECKLIST

Part 1 / 1

INFORMATIONAL BRIEFING		
on the Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority (GHURA) <i>Status of Housing Programs, Policy and Procedures for review of new employees and board members to ensure there are no conflicts of interests</i>		
(A) PUBLIC HEARING	(1) HEARING NOTICES	
	SR §§ 6.04(a)(1) and 6.04(a)(2), Open Government Law (5 GCA, Ch. 8)	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (a) Five (5) working days prior (ALL Senators & ALL Media)	Date and Time of Notice: 3/24/17 4:59pm
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (b) Forty-eight (48) hours prior (ALL Senators & ALL Media)	Date and Time of Notice: 3/29/17 1:14pm
	(2) Date and Time of Hearing: 4/3/17 2:00pm	3) Location: Public Hearing Room, Guam Congress Building
(B) COMMITTEE REPORT	(1) Committee Report filed with COR? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Date & Time: 5/3/17 5:00pm
	(2) COMMITTEE REPORT COMPONENTS	
	(a) Front Page Transmittal to Speaker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	(a)(1) COR Chair Signature Line	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	(b) Title Page	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	(c) Notice of Public Hearing & Other Correspondence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	(d) Public Hearing Agenda	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	(e) Public Hearing Sign-in Sheet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	(f) Written Testimonies & Additional Documents	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	(g) Committee Report Digest(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	(h) Related News Reports (optional)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(i) Miscellaneous (optional)	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
(j) Committee Report Checklist(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
(C) COR Action	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CMTE Report duly filed <input type="checkbox"/> CMTE Report non-conforming for acceptance; Return to Committee	COR CHAIR Signature, Date & Time 5/4/17 11:24

