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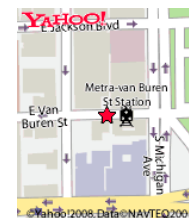
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CHA board approves new rules for public housing residents

BY CLAIRE BUSHEY

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The Chicago Housing Authority board voted unanimously this morning to institute new rules for life in

public housing, paving the way for changes to how residents work, live and participate in their communities.

The plan introduces work requirements for most residents older than 18 and abolishes tenants' councils in mixed-income communities, the tripartite neighborhoods of public, affordable and market-rate housing that are replacing some of the city's public housing developments.

The new plan also gives the agency the authority to impose term limits on how long residents live in public housing, but the CHA says it has no immediate plans to do so.

The contract now goes to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, but as the two entities negotiated

the terms in advance, approval should be "pro forma," says Kate Walz, senior staff attorney on the housing team at the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law.

"Once there's HUD approval, they're good to go," she says.

Robin Snyderman, a public housing expert for the Metropolitan Planning Council, said agency officials told her there were no substantial changes to the plan from when it was publicly introduced in March.

But the actual document board members approved Wednesday was not made public, leaving housing advocates in the dark as to whether any of their recommendations to the plan had been implemented.

Housing Authority officials said the document will be made public within a couple of weeks, citing the need for staff to put it into a final format.

That did not sit well with some advocates.

"If it was board-approved today, it should be public to everyone," Walz says. "Transparency is to the CHA's advantage."

Critics have leveled a list of charges at the plan. The Central Advisory Council, which represents all CHA residents, has said work requirements violate a state law meant to protect children, that they would lead to homelessness and that replacing tenants' councils with a CHA-appointed ombudsman "squashed an independent voice for public housing residents."

The new rules are one more part of the nine-year-old, \$1.6 billion Plan for Transformation, the nation's largest public housing redevelopment project. The CHA is rehabbing some housing developments and demolishing others, replacing them with mixed-income communities.

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