



NEWS RELEASE

High Point Housing Authority

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HIGH POINT HOUSING AUTHORITY RESPONDS TO REQUESTS FOR USE OF COMMON SPACE

After receiving numerous complaints regarding non-residents, unauthorized religious services and collections taking place at the Elm Towers Community, the Housing Authority of the City of High Point (“HPHA”) sought guidance in administering HUD regulations found at 24 CFR 5.109 relating to religious activities in its common areas. This regulation says “organizations that receive direct HUD funds under a HUD program or activity may not engage in inherently religious activities, such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization, as part of the programs or services funded under a HUD program or activity. If an organization conducts such inherently religious activities, the inherently religious activities must be offered separately, in time or location, from the programs, activities, or services supported by direct HUD funds and participation must be voluntary for the beneficiaries of the programs, activities or services provided under the HUD program.” HPHA sought guidance from HUD Greensboro about how to interpret this regulation. Initially, HPHA was told to cease the religious activities taking place at Elm Towers; and we did so. Later, HPHA was given a second opinion by HUD in a letter dated August 26, 2009.

HUD's letter of advice says "HUD's longstanding position is that PHAs and other recipients of HUD funding may permit residents to use common space for recreational, civic, cultural, and religious activities that enrich tenant's lives. If a PHA permits outside (non-resident) group's access to common areas, religious groups must generally be given access on the same basis as non-religious groups. A PHA, however, may set reasonable restrictions on the activities of any non-residents who enter the property to use the common area or may limit use of common space only to residents."

According to Robert L. Kenner, CEO of the High Point Housing Authority, "The safety and well-being of our residents as well as compliance with HUD regulations have always been our main priorities. We will continue to conduct our day-to-day operations with these two objectives as our goals."

HPHA is currently working to develop a policy that will address the use of its common areas in a non-discriminatory manner.