Community Development Committee
Meeting date: March 16, 2015

Subject: Metro HRA Software Changes and Waiting List Opening Update

Policy/Legal Reference: N/A

Staff Prepared/Presented: Terri Smith, HRA Manager, (651) 602-1187

Division/Department: Community Development / HRA

Proposed Action
None. Information item only.

Background
The Council's Housing and Redevelopment Authority (Metro HRA) has been administering rent assistance programs, specifically the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, for 40 years, on a computer system built by internal Information Services staff. The Oracle database worked well for many years, allowing the HRA to manage $50 million in rent payments to 2,500 private landlords each year. The system was also used to complete electronic reporting to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on the 6,300 rent assistance participants.

In an effort to gain efficiencies and streamline processes, the Metro HRA issued a Request for Proposals in January 2014 for a new software solution. A panel of HRA and IS staff selected a vendor and a contract was signed in July 2014. After 6 months of planning and custom programming, the Metro HRA went live with a new system called HousingPRO from the vendor HAPPY Software. HousingPRO is a software solution built specifically for housing authorities administering rent assistance programs.

The move to the new software will create great efficiencies in workflow and process, moving from a paper to a paperless system including:
- Electronic caseload management
- Electronic inspection reporting
- Fully integrated document management system
- Online applicant, tenant and landlord portals

The Metro HRA recently opened its Section 8 HCV waiting list for the first time since 2007 at the end of February 2015. Applications were completed online using the new online applicant portal. During the four-day application opening, the Metro HRA received 35,917 applications, amplifying the extreme need for affordable housing in the region. The new system handled the volume seamlessly.

The HRA completed a random drawing to place just 2,000 applicants on the waiting list. The Council adopted a preference to award 95% of waiting list placements to persons who live, work, or attend school in the seven-county metro area to ensure the scarce resources serve residents of the region. HRA staff expects all applicants to be offered rent assistance within the next 2-3 years if current funding levels remain stable. Once the majority of the applicants on the list are offered assistance, the list will be opened again.