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BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Message from SAHA Board of Commissioners, June 18, 2009

In January of 2008, former Mayor Phil Hardberger named five new members to the Board of Commissioners of the San Antonio Housing Authority, suggesting that their challenges would be great and the issues many. Immediately, the new board began the task of reviewing past and present practices, instituting reforms, directing staff to scrutinize many diverse areas of operations including procurement processes, maintenance, resident attention, the Mirasol imbroglio, the "Move to Work" program, and personnel practices.

"The new Board directed staff to pursue reviews, program assessments, and multiple audits, and to report to the board on past and present SAHA activity," said SAHA Board Chair Ramiro Cavazos.

"The Board secured a new, reform-minded, experienced President and CEO, Lourdes Castro Ramirez, who has hit the ground running," said Cavazos. "She is vigorously pursuing a comprehensive assessment, ratcheting-up system controls, planning new pathways for progress, treating our people with dignity, and assuring we received value for our tax dollars. We are completing the transformation of SAHA into the very best housing authority in the nation."

"The Board set the reform foundation and directives for our new President and CEO and she has moved with vigor and special expertise," said SAHA Vice-Chair Rebecca Galvan. "She's added the extra dimension SAHA has needed. Her significant experience administering and, frankly, turning around a huge housing program allows SAHA to reach new heights and continue this Board's efforts to scrutinize, investigate, and maximizing agency operations." Castro Ramirez assumed her new role in mid April 2009.

"We've launched this vigorous reform effort with board directives unparalleled in SAHA history," said Commissioner Richard Gambitta. "Today's federal announcements constitute only one episode of an ongoing strategic plan dedicated to restoring and assuring public trust, transparency, and integrity in government. A NEW SAHA is birthing. And this new entity, the people have longed to have. The delivery is occurring."

Cavazos said: "Wrongdoing is being dealt with; doing the right thing will be rewarded. Those who have taken advantage of the public, of our residents, or of our federal, state or local dollars or trust, will regret it."

"Irregularities came to light after commissioners initiated a series of audits to focus on SAHA internal financial and compliance policies, Cavazos said. "Board members directed the staff to work with federal officials to investigate any and all wrongdoing."

SAHA's new President and CEO, Lourdes Castro Ramirez, said she learned of the federal investigation upon assuming her job in April 2009. She then immediately initiated a comprehensive review of SAHA's procurement policies, maintenance, purchasing, and instituted new accountability measures and procedures.

SAHA, a national leader in providing affordable housing, is the largest housing authority in Texas and was recently ranked as the largest public developer of affordable housing in the nation. SAHA owns and manages approximately 6,500 public housing units, administers over 12,000 contracts in the Housing Choice Voucher Program (known as "Section 8"), and oversees 6,200 affordable housing units through its non-profit entities and partnerships.

SAHA has briefed Mayor Julian Castro's offices regarding SAHA's accountability measures and current reform actions.

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