



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

VACANT
First District

JOEL ANDERSON
Second District

TERRA LAWSON-REMER
Third District

MONICA MONTGOMERY STEPPE
Fourth District

JIM DESMOND
Fifth District

DATE: May 6, 2025

07

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

APPROVE APPOINTMENT OF NILSA HIGGINS AS TENANT COMMISSIONER FOR THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

The Housing Authority of the County of San Diego (County Housing Authority) Board of Commissioners consists of five members of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors and two tenant commissioners. The tenant commissioners, as voting members of the County Housing Authority Board of Commissioners, provide a formal mechanism for participant involvement in the interpretation and enforcement of policies and procedures of housing programs administered by the County Housing Authority.

Today's action requests that the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) approve the appointment of Nilsa Higgins to fill the Senior Tenant Commissioner seat in which the new term will begin on June 1, 2025. In accordance with the California Health and Safety Code section 34290 (b), the Senior Tenant Commissioner seat must be filled by a tenant in either the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher or Public Housing program who is 62 years of age or older.

This item supports the County of San Diego (County) vision of a just, sustainable, and resilient future for all, specifically those communities and populations in San Diego County that have been historically left behind, as well as our ongoing commitment to the regional *Live Well San Diego* vision of healthy, safe, and thriving communities. In addition, this item supports the County Framework for Ending Homelessness and the Housing Blueprint. This will be accomplished by incorporating the voice of the customer with lived experiences when reviewing and approving key programs.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Appoint Nilsa Higgins to serve as Senior Tenant Commissioner for the Housing Authority of the County of San Diego Board of Commissioners for a two-year term commencing on June 1, 2025.

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EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The Housing Authority of the County of San Diego (County Housing Authority) administers various rental subsidy programs, funded by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), intended to assist very low-income families, the elderly, homeless Veterans, and persons with disabilities to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market. As mandated by federal regulations, at least 75% of applicants must qualify as an extremely low-income family with income at or below 30% of area median income (\$39,700 for a family of two and/or \$49,600 for a family of four), and the remaining applicants must not exceed the low-income maximum of 50% of the area median income (\$66,150 for a family of two and/or \$82,700 for a family of four).

The County Housing Authority incorporates transparency and open government in the development of policy and budget through presentations to the Resident Advisory Board and involvement of tenant commissioners. Resident Advisory Board meetings are held throughout the year and facilitate discussion regarding housing needs within the community. Tenant commissioners serve on the County Housing Authority's Board of Commissioners, as required by law. One of the two appointed tenant commissioner seats must be filled by a tenant who is 62 years of age or older. The recruitment was open to current Public Housing residents and Housing Choice Voucher (or Section 8) participants. To engage interested candidates in serving as a tenant commissioner, the County Housing Authority issued a recruitment announcement, a fact sheet, and application via U.S. mail, and via email bulletin. The County Housing Authority is committed to continuing efforts to provide rental assistance and advancing equitable access and opportunity for households served in these programs to live in safe and affordable housing.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed action to approve the appointment of Nilsa Higgins to fill the Senior Tenant Commissioner seat vacancy will contribute to the County of San Diego Sustainability Goals #1 of engaging the community in meaningful ways, Sustainability Goal #2 of providing just and equitable access, and Sustainability Goal #4 of protecting the health and wellbeing of everyone in the region. Engaging the public and assisting tenants in the policy planning process create intentional collaborative community engagement opportunities that strengthen healthy, safe and thriving communities. The inclusion of tenant commissioners brings a lived experience lens to the governing body of the Housing Authority of the County of San Diego when approving program activities, such as the Public Housing Agency Plan, the annual budget requests for funding, changes in program administration, and implementation of housing programs. These programs serve to remove barriers from low-income families seeking to live in areas of greater economic opportunity. Equitable access to housing reduces the demand for community services, which may lessen the overall environmental impact on the region.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-26 Housing Authority of the County of San Diego (County Housing Authority) Recommended Budget. If approved, this request will result in costs and revenue of \$50 per diem compensation for each County Housing Authority Board of Commissioners meeting attended by the tenant commissioners in FY 2025-26, in accordance with California Health and Safety Code section 34274. This per diem compensation will result in annual costs of approximately \$300. The funding source is federal funds provided for

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the County Housing Authority's program administration. There will be no change in net General Fund costs and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

If approved, today's request will have a positive impact on the business community as it supports the governance of the Housing Authority of the County of San Diego and programs that provide rental assistance income to participating landlords.

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

The Housing Authority of the County of San Diego (County Housing Authority) Board of Commissioners consists of the five members of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) and two tenant commissioners. The tenant commissioners, as voting members of the County Housing Authority Board of Commissioners, provide a formal mechanism for participant involvement in the interpretation and enforcement of policies and procedures of housing programs, administered by the County Housing Authority.

The County Housing Authority administers the Housing Choice Voucher (or Section 8) program, the Public Housing program, and several rental assistance programs for special needs populations throughout the unincorporated areas in San Diego County, and 13 of the 18 cities within San Diego County. Through its programs, the County Housing Authority provides direct rental assistance to approximately 23,000 low-income individuals each month. Participants in these programs include working families, Veterans, elderly, and persons with disabilities.

The County Housing Authority Board of Commissioners is the governing body of the County Housing Authority. As the governing body, the County Housing Authority Board of Commissioners is responsible for approving program activities, such as the Public Housing Authority Plan, the annual budget, requests for funding, changes in program administration, and implementation of new housing programs. The California Health and Safety Code Section 34290 (b) outlines the appointment of tenant commissioners as follows:

- Two tenant commissioners shall be appointed.
- Tenant commissioners must be tenants of the County Housing Authority, i.e., participants in either the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher or Public Housing program.
- At least one of the tenants shall be over 62 years of age.

The two tenant commissioner seats have alternating two-year terms beginning June 1, 2023. One seat (designated as the general tenant commissioner seat) has a term through May 31, 2026, and the second seat (designated as the Senior Tenant Commissioner seat and must be filled by a tenant who is 62 years of age or older) has a current term that ends on May 31, 2025, and the new term begins on June 1, 2025.

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To engage interested candidates to serve as a tenant commissioner, the County Housing Authority issued a recruitment announcement, a fact sheet, and application via United States mail to 5,500 participants, and via email bulletin to approximately 35,106 current Public Housing residents and Section 8 participants. The recruitment announcement was posted in the County Housing Authority's lobby and on their website and were available in the County threshold languages.

The recruitment for the tenant commissioner vacancies resulted in receiving nine applications. Two of the applications received did not meet the initial eligibility criteria. Interviews were offered to the seven applicants that met the eligibility criteria. Five of the seven applicants scheduled and participated in the interview process. Applicants were interviewed by a panel of County staff, who included both management staff and executive leadership. Applicants were evaluated based on relevant lived experience, pertinent knowledge of community engagement and social programs, and interest in serving the community. All appointed tenant commissioners are required to participate in onboarding training within six months of appointment.

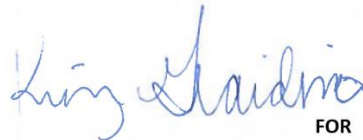
Regular Appointment of Nilsa Higgins

Based on the interview, further evaluation, and background review, the County Housing Authority is recommending Nilsa Higgins for regular appointment as tenant commissioner. She has prior experience serving as a tenant commissioner for the County Housing Authority Board of Commissioners for the past two years and has shown great interest in serving the community. Today's action requests Board approval of the appointment of Nilsa Higgins to serve a two-year term for the senior tenant commissioner seat, commencing on June 1, 2025.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's proposed action supports the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan Initiatives of Sustainability (Economy and Resiliency), Equity (Health and Economic Opportunity), Empower (Transparency and Accountability), Community (Engagement, Quality of Life, Communications, and Partnership), and Justice (Environmental). The inclusion of tenant commissioners on the Housing Authority of the County of San Diego (County Housing Authority) Board of Commissioners adds accountability in support of the programs administered by the County Housing Authority that provide affordable housing opportunities for approximately 23,000 low-income individuals in the region.

Respectfully submitted,



FOR

EBONY N. SHELTON
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A