

Ald. Joe Moore Takes Over Housing Committee, Puts Heat on CHA

By [Ted Cox](#) | June 8, 2015 3:27pm



Ald. Joe Moore (r.) chats with Kevin Jackson of the Chicago Rehab Network and Ald. David Moore (l.) after his first meeting as chairman of the Housing Committee.

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CITY HALL — Taking the reins of the City Council's Housing Committee, Ald. Joe Moore (49th) committed himself Monday to "affordable housing in particular" and put immediate heat on a top city agency.

Moore said his primary goal as chairman of the committee is "making sure that housing and affordable housing in particular are high on the administration's agenda."

Moore drew immediate attention to the Chicago Housing Authority, which [some aldermen have charged has left millions in vouchers unspent](#). Aldermen called on former Housing Chairman Ray Suarez to hold hearings on the CHA in January, but he failed to do so before losing in the April runoff to Ald. Milly Santiago (31st).

"I plan on making sure they're asked that question in a public forum," Moore said Monday during a hearing on a quarterly report on the city's five-year plan for housing.

The CHA and the Emanuel administration announced over the weekend that Eugene Jones would become chief executive officer of the agency.

"Gene Jones has a proven track record of being a solution-driven leader in public housing," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel, citing his previous work in Detroit, Indianapolis, Kansas City, New Orleans, San Francisco and elsewhere in California.

Moore said he would allow time for Jones to settle in before pressing him for details on the CHA's surplus vouchers, adding, "I don't think the previous administration of the CHA has done a really good job of explaining to people about why we have all that money."

According to the Mayor's Press Office, the CHA leased 3,000 housing vouchers last year and is "on target" to lease 6,000 more this year.

Yet Ald. Roberto Maldonado (26th) has suggested the CHA's unspent funds, which some have estimated in the hundreds of millions of dollars, could translate to 62,000 vouchers for the homeless and others needing affordable housing.

The quarterly housing report, delivered by Deputy Commissioner Lawrence Grisham, of the Department of Planning and Development's Bureau of Housing, made a point of cheering the new Affordable Requirements Ordinance. That measure makes it more difficult for developers to pay "opt-out fees" for affordable housing by creating a three-tiered pay scale across the city.

The new ordinance doubles the \$100,000-a-unit opt-out fee to \$175,000-\$225,000 Downtown, increases it to \$125,000 in higher-income areas and cuts it to \$50,000 in lower-income areas in an attempt to encourage development there. It takes effect in October after clearing the City Council in March.

Kevin Jackson, executive director of the Chicago Rehab Network, applauded the report, while adding, "The demand for affordable housing is at a record high."