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OHA Board Appointment is off again after complaint

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The off-again-on-again appointee to the **Omaha Housing Authority** board is off again. The U.S. Department of **Housing** and Urban Development says Nell Winford's reappointment should be rescinded because it violates federal law.

The violation? OHA did not extend an invitation to apply to all recipients of federal **housing** aid when Winford's term on the board was expiring.

By law, OHA must have a recipient of **housing** aid on its board. In the past, OHA has narrowly defined "recipient" as a resident of public **housing**. Under federal law, the resident board member also could be someone who gets a federal Section 8 voucher, which reduces open-market rent.

Creighton University law professor Kate Mahern complained before the **Omaha** City Council and to HUD that OHA didn't canvass Section 8 voucher-holders for the opening. HUD has agreed, saying in a letter Friday to OHA that the agency "must follow proper procedures to solicit names of interested residents" or face further actions by the department.

OHA board Chairman Phil Wayne said OHA would send out another letter and wait for 30 days, and then a fuller list of names would be sent to Mayor Jim Suttle's office.

Wayne said OHA doesn't yet have a legal interpretation about Winford's legal standing, but his view is that her appointment to the board stands until the City Council rescinds it.

Suttle appointed Winford to a third term in December, and the City

Council approved the five-year volunteer appointment Jan. 11. But then city lawyers said the appointment was invalid because it was made before OHA had finished canvassing residents.

Suttle again chose Winford. The City Council again approved her appointment on Feb. 8.

The OHA board's next public meeting is at 8 a.m. Thursday at its headquarters, 540 S. 27th St.

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