

Letter to the Editor  
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In its August 23 article (“The Housing Commission’s ‘Trojan Horse’ ”), Voice of San Diego alleges that the San Diego Housing Commission misled the City Council into approving a revised Real Estate Acquisition policy by claiming it was primarily meant to ease the foreclosure crisis.

However, like the ancient story, this Trojan horse is a myth.

First of all, the title of the policy is *Real Estate Acquisition Policy*, not *Foreclosure Policy*. Five days before the City Council met on March 24, 2009, all eight council members, who also serve as the Housing Authority, received the March 19, 2009, eight-page Housing Authority report, which clearly spells out the Real Estate Acquisition Policy. In fact, it is cited six times throughout the report, including on the first page.

In the article, five of the eight council members who voted for the revised Real Estate Acquisition policy clearly understood the policy’s intent to cover all real estate acquisitions, not just foreclosures. In other words, there was no “Trojan horse.”

The article also alleges that: “The commission has been able to make those deals while bypassing the City Council, avoiding the public scrutiny it once would’ve faced.” Elsewhere, the article states the policy “has allowed the commission almost free reign.”

Simply not true.

Under the policy, any acquisition approved by the seven-member Housing Commission Board, which is appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council, may be reviewed by the Housing Authority within seven days of the vote.

Let’s be clear on this: Throughout these public proceedings, the Housing Commission has been transparent with the City Council and the public. The Housing Commission took numerous public actions to ensure that all proposed real estate acquisitions were completely disclosed to the City Council and that they were given ample opportunity to review them.

For each proposed acquisition, the Housing Commission met with the appropriate council member for the district the acquisition was located. Housing Commission agendas and comprehensive board reports were sent to all City Council offices, including the chiefs of staff, one week in advance of scheduled Housing Commission Board meetings. Housing Commission Board meetings are public. Each time the Housing Commission Board approved a real estate acquisition, the City Council was provided the timely seven-day notification.

None of the eight members of the City Council requested review “within seven days of the date of any Housing Commission Board approval of an acquisition...” In fact, in many cases, more than the seven- day notice was given to the members of the Housing Authority.

It is important to note that the policy only requires one council member to object for a real estate acquisition to be delayed for further review. None did.

Furthermore, four of the nine properties went before the Housing Authority for project approval either because multifamily housing bonds were involved or because there was a concurrent action of the Redevelopment Agency, because of joint funding of the projects. This provided another opportunity for elected officials to take one of the following actions: 1) approve or disapprove the projects; 2) address any concerns they may have had; or 3) request that staff return with additional information. No objections were made.

Again, it is unclear and misleading to imply that the Housing Commission somehow “avoided public scrutiny” or had “almost free reign.” In fact, we provided multiple, detailed descriptions of the Housing Commission’s actions to the City Council. A single objection could have stopped any acquisition.

It is equally troubling that these allegations are being made two and a half years after the revised policy was approved. My staff and I have been before the City Council a total of 62 times and the City Council’s Land Use & Housing Committee 28 times. In addition, I have met regularly with all the city council members for a total of 85 meetings to date.

It is important to note that the revised Real Estate Acquisition policy will ultimately lead to 741 desperately-needed affordable housing units in San Diego. Our ability to create these additional affordable housing units is largely due to applying management principles that ensure streamlined operations and fiscal accountability to taxpayers.

This is a course the Housing Commission has charted to ensure continued affordable housing opportunities that improve the quality of life for very low to moderate income families, seniors and disabled individuals in the City of San Diego.

It is an effort that deserves everyone’s support.