

State funds boost Housing Authority plans

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to Success Plan proposed by Executive Director Doug Bushman.

The goal of the plan, which would be funded through the state Department of Housing and Economic Development, is to make the Housing Authority sustainable, maintain a high standard, and empower staff and residents.

It would also help address problems the authority has had with vacancies, property management, and staffing.

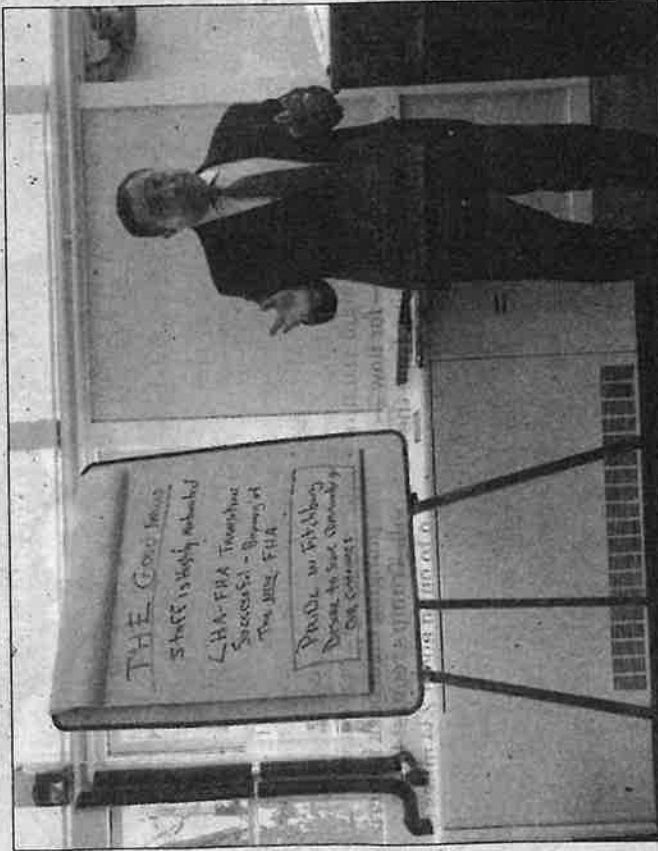
The authority has a 15 percent vacancy rate, or roughly 70 units, Bushman said. That number is down from years ago when it was put under management of Leominster's authority.

Mark Cunningham, a maintenance worker, said extra money and workers are needed to get vacant units ready and help with daily building maintenance.

Another area to focus on is collecting overdue rent from past and present tenants — about \$125,000.

Bushman said it's possible to pursue legal action to receive payment, but he said the authority shouldn't focus on being debt collectors. It could work with an outside company for that service, he said.

Moving forward, Bushman said he will work with authority's two tenants associations and that he would like to present the Pathway to



Fitchburg Housing Authority Executive Director Doug Bushman talks to the Board of Directors about challenges the authority faces at its meeting Wednesday.

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Success Plan to the larger community. He also wants to go to Boston to advocate for funding.

"Let's get these problems addressed," Bushman said. "Let's get this done."

Maintenance foreman Bart Larkin said since Bushman began, he and staff members have felt better and see potential for the Housing Authority.

He mentioned the Canton Valley Community Center, where the board held its meeting, as an example of how the maintenance staff has already gotten to work. They installed new hardwood floors and added a touch of paint.

"I can see (the authority) going from the bottom to an example," Larkin said.

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Housing agency out to improve with state funds

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FITCHBURG — The Housing Authority Board of Directors approved a \$650,000 plan Wednesday that will fund property maintenance, staffing, training and other initiatives.

"It's not a lot of money in the scheme of things," said board member Mary Gianetti.

All of the board members in attendance voted in favor of the Pathways

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