

Caribou Housing Authority

- *Serving Local Needs Since 1977* -

Although 2020 was not an ordinary year, we continue to be focused on our core work of providing rental assistance for affordable housing and becoming self-sufficient. As an “essential service”, housing authorities have had to adapt quickly amid the COVID-19 outbreak to keep providing necessary and critical services to participants. Our goal was and is to maintain the same level of service as before the pandemic. A few of the services that COVID-19 has affected were and still are:

Staffing: Per order of Governor Mills, our office closed to the public in March. While other Public Housing Authorities in the state made arrangements for staff to work from home, Caribou Housing staff worked in-house, serving our families and landlords to the best of our ability. After we opened to the public, Housing staff asked families and landlords to remain conducting business via phone, email, fax, and mail; for the safety of everyone.

New Applicants & Annual Reexaminations: All new applicants, including all Re-examinations were changed from being conducted in-person to being conducted by mail. Staff changed many letters, forms, and time frames to better meet the needs of those being served. To date, a good part of our business is still being conducted by mail.

Inspections: Inspections took on a different face and time frame in 2020. Not knowing what staff was going to be faced with and the road that COVID would take, all annual/biennial/special inspections were postponed from starting in May until late July. The inspector not only had to carry their normal inspection tools, but also started wearing the proper face covering, non-latex gloves and hand sanitizer; taking the proper precautions between every unit being conducted.

Starting in November 2020, Caribou Housing adopted the “Owner Certification” in lieu of conducting inspections on all Initial and Biennial Inspections. The only inspections that staff are conducting are by request of the participant.

HUD Waivers: Throughout the year, staff was busy keeping track of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) who was exercising their authority under the CARES ACT establishing waivers and administrative flexibility for the Housing Authorities in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Waivers that Caribou Housing Authority adopted were: conducting New Applicant Briefings via mail (vs in person), delaying Biennial Inspections until 06/30/2021 (unless life-threatening); adopting and putting into place new policies in the Administrative Plan without Board approval until 03/31/2021, which will be formally adopted by the end of June 2021.

CARES Act Funding: In 2020, Caribou Housing Authority received \$51,756 in Cares Act Funding. Being a Housing Choice Voucher Housing Agency only, we are very limited on what we can use the funding for. To date, Caribou Housing has used some of the funds to purchase personal protective equipment (i.e. face covering, gloves, hand sanitizer) for staff; webcams for our Zoom meetings, and postage cost increases (mailings of reexamination packages to families).

- Shortly before Christmas, Caribou Housing mailed out a “Winter Wellness Package” to every program family that contained non-alcohol hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes, a forehead thermometer, and a reusable/washable face covering (for every household member).

- Landlord Incentive Program was created and put into effect on December 1st. Due to COVID-19, rental units are very hard to find, not just in Caribou, but everywhere in the State of Maine. Caribou Housing Authority is offering \$500 to new landlords who are new the Section 8 Program; along with a \$100.00 bonus to landlords who recommend their current non-Section 8 tenant(s) to sign up for the Section 8 Program and enters a new lease. To date, Caribou Housing has three (3) new landlords, and two (2) landlord recommendations.

The staff of Caribou Housing Authority is proud of the fact that not one individual or family in our programs lost their housing due to any economic hardships because of the pandemic. Our Agency represents 2,174 households on the Section 8 Program. Landlords who participate in the Section 8 Voucher Program were also protected in terms of the full rent they receive. The program alone brings \$940 thousand annually into our community.

We are deeply grateful for the support of the Housing Board of Commissioners, the City Council, the City Manager, all City Departments, participating landlords, partnering organizations, and the community at large for our past and future endeavors to provide housing and services.

2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

2,174 Households Served (181 Families / Month)



- 25% - Elderly
- 7% - Single Person
- 64% - Disabled
- 4% - Family

Household Income



- 8 - TANF
- 10 - Zero Income
- 31 - Social Security
- 41 - Wages
- 91 - Disability

Average Annual Household Income:
\$12,602/ Year

\$948,847 In Rental Assistance

- 57 Total Property Owners
- 36 Reside in Caribou

Average Housing Assistance
Payment: \$392

181 Rental Units



- 0 - 0 Bedroom
- 77 - 1 Bedroom
- 80 - 2 Bedrooms
- 31 - 3 Bedrooms
- 0 - 4 Bedrooms

Common Unit Failures

- Inoperable Smoke Detector
- Missing Carbon Monoxide Detector
- Missing 911 Unit Number
- Inoperable GFCI Outlets

492 FSS Participants (42 Families / Month)

- 33 Working
- 1 Attending School

Escrow Contributions

- Total Escrow Deposits
\$59,179
- Average Escrow Deposit
\$1,849

FSS Graduates

- 2 Graduates
- \$12,040 received in
Escrow payments

95 Graduates since 1993

Respectfully Submitted,
Lisa Plourde
Housing Director