

Alexandria to Maintain Public Housing

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The Alexandria City Council last week unanimously approved a motion committing the city to maintain a specific number of public housing units. The motion by Councilwoman Marlee Inman, reaffirming a 1972 resolution, is intended to reassure the estimated 2,800 public housing residents who fear they might be evicted as the mortgages of the aging projects are paid off.

However, the 1972 resolution obligates the city to maintain only 1,021 units. More than 120 units have come under the city's jurisdiction since

then. Reaffirming the resolution had the effect of also reaffirming the city's 1972 contract with the semi-independent housing authority, which holds title to the land. That contract also covers only 1,021 units.

City officials said their intent was to maintain all 1,150 units in the public housing program. Council members said they have asked the city staff to work out proposals for resolving the discrepancy and report back to the council.

City officials said they did not try to amend the 1972 resolution because they did not have a copy of it at their meeting last week.

Two public housing projects, one located near the Braddock Road Metro station and the other in Old Town, are scheduled to be debt-free within the year. Those projects are on some of the most valuable property in the city.

The council has received a proposal from Baltimore developer Morton Sarubin, offering to buy eight of the city's nine public housing projects, build new projects for residents and make his profit from new commercial and residential structures he would build on the land. The council has expressed interest in the proposal, but has taken no action.