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... Housing Authority Yearly Meeting 1992

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WWHA strategic plan objectives nearly complete

As of last month, housing authority has met 138 of 139 objectives ahead of schedule, executive director said

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WEST WARWICK — When he stepped into the executive director position at the West Warwick Housing Authority in 2017, Stephen O'Rourke faced the daunting task of fixing the troubles plaguing the organization and reversing the bad reputation it had earned over the years prior.

"When I arrived there, the housing authority really wasn't well organized," O'Rourke said Thursday, recounting the rampant financial issues.

And less than three years later, having met nearly every one of more than 100 objectives identified following O'Rourke's arrival, the housing authority has taken some significant steps forward.

Those objectives — 139 in total

— were set as part of a three-year comprehensive strategic plan that O'Rourke said was critical for improving the housing authority. As of the end of 2019, 138 of them have been completed.

"All of the main issues that were taking a negative toll on the housing authority back in 2017 are now gone," O'Rourke said.

Developed by the board and staff with stakeholder input, the objec-

tives were determined based on extensive research into the organization's key issues. With each falling under one of seven identified strategic issues, the objectives covered a broad range of areas, from affordable housing to resident services.

"We looked at every aspect of everything," O'Rourke said. "We looked at the economy, we looked at the people we deal with, how we affect them, are they satisfied?"

The only objective yet to be accomplished involves hosting a fundraiser for a nonprofit created recently within the housing authority to fund programming for the some 275 elderly and disabled residents who live between West Warwick Manor and Clyde Tower — O'Rourke has repeatedly touted socialization as an important factor in a healthy quality

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of life.

"People socializing and getting along with one another is always important," he said.

Survey feedback has indicated that residents enjoy social gatherings like holiday meals and birthday parties, O'Rourke said, adding that funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development isn't meant to be put toward those kinds of events.

There's not yet a concrete plan, but the fundraiser to benefit resident programming will likely be held early this year.

As for next steps, O'Rourke said the housing authority board will work during its annual training and development retreat on creating a new goals management plan. That plan, he said, will be organized based on departments within the housing authority.

Noting that strategic planning is crucial for measuring success, O'Rourke added

that the goals management plan will be "like a blueprint for the organization about where we're going."

"It's always important for someone coming in the morning to know what they have to get done," said O'Rourke, who added that the plan will be informed in part by feedback from a survey that was given to residents, elected officials and outside stakeholders.

Debra Tocco, vice chair of the organization's board, lauded housing authority staff members for their role

in accomplishing the objectives ahead of schedule.

"Our staff deserves a great deal of credit for moving these goals and objectives forward," she said. "It's quite an achievement to complete so much in such a short period of time."

O'Rourke shared a similar sentiment.

"I am very proud of our accomplishments," he said. "The staff and board have been laser-like focused on achieving these goals and objectives over the last two years."