

# WWHA turning 60, seeks photos for display

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**WEST WARWICK —** In the summer of 1962, 25 West Warwick residents submitted to the town clerk a petition calling for a local housing authority to be established.

At the direction of the town council, a public hearing was scheduled. Several people spoke in favor of bringing decent, affordable public housing to West Warwick, and the council adopted a resolution declaring the “need for a public housing authority.”

The rest is history.

Next month will mark 60 years since the West Warwick Housing Authority’s first ever board of commissioners was appointed.

“It’s an important milestone,” said Stephen J. O’Rourke, the housing authority’s executive director. “I think it’s something to

celebrate.”

And celebrate the housing authority will. But as it prepares to commemorate its founding, the organization is seeking from the public any items that might help tell its story.

A 60th anniversary exhibit will go on display next month, featuring photographs taken over the years at the housing authority’s two developments, as well as various old documents. The plan is to set it up in the community room of West Warwick Manor, O’Rourke said, and at some point to move it for a week or so to Clyde Tower.

An open house will likely be held so that the rest of the community can check out the display, and in January, housing authority residents and some other special guests will celebrate during an event at Valley Country Club.

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In his searches through local newspaper archives at the West Warwick Public Library, O’Rourke was able to find a few photos harking back to the housing authority’s early days; in one, the manor’s first ever resident, joined by his daughter, is pic-

tured moving in.

Still, O’Rourke said, he would like to get his hands on more images — of the manor’s construction, of residents from decades past — that could go into the anniversary display.

Aside from photographs, other interesting memorabilia related to the housing authority’s history are also being collected.

“If anybody has any interesting anecdotes they can contact us,” O’Rourke said.

“Any photographs of relatives who were living there — anything that might prove useful for our records.”

When those residents in 1962 created their petition for a housing authority, there had been a need locally for subsidized housing, particularly for the town’s elderly, O’Ro-

urke said.

Built two years later, West Warwick Manor became the housing authority’s first development. Then came Clyde Tower, built in 1971, the Main Street development was expanded significantly in 1984.

Between the two locations are 250 units, offering housing to West Warwick residents who may otherwise

have difficulty finding an affordable place to live.

The average annual income of the housing authority’s tenants today is \$16,700, according to O’Rourke, and they pay an average monthly rent of \$380 — well below the current cost of market-rate housing.

“Where would all those people live if there wasn’t some type of subsidized

housing for them?” O’Rourke added. “We’re pleased to be able to provide that.”

Those with something to contribute to the housing authority’s anniversary display are invited to bring it by West Warwick Manor, at 62 Robert St., West Warwick, or email it to O’Rourke at [SJO@westwarwickha.org](mailto:SJO@westwarwickha.org) anytime before the end of this month.