

## Lebanon Housing Authority 50<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary Statement

It is with great pride that the Lebanon Housing Authority celebrates its fiftieth anniversary since its establishment on July 9, 1964 by resolution of the Lebanon City Council in accord with state law at NH RSA 203:4. Born of the tragedy that was the disastrous fire that swept across downtown Lebanon just days earlier on June 19<sup>th</sup>, the community sensed the need for federal assistance in order to rebuild. At that time, acting with assistance from New Hampshire's then Governor John King, Congressman James Cleveland and hometown U.S. Senator Norris Cotton under Title of the U.S. Housing Act of 1949, the City Council resolved that it was desirable and in the public interest that the Lebanon Housing Authority make surveys and prepare plans to undertake and carry out an urban renewal project in the Central Business District. The Council was equally cognizant of the conditions imposed by the Federal Government in undertaking and carrying out an Urban Renewal Project including relocation of site occupants; preventing discrimination with respect to housing, facilities related to residential use, and all public facilities within a project area; and employment. It was also the sense of that Council that a feasible method for the relocation of families displaced from Urban Renewal Areas be prepared and carried out by the Lebanon Housing Authority. Thus, it was that the first mission for this Agency had been clearly defined without the clarity of details that become clearer with the passage of time.

The Authority's early years certainly bore out the adage: "The Devil is in the details." History would soon show that LHA projects were not always popular nor easily approved by City Councils of yesteryear. Clarity of purpose and persistence on numerous projects were ultimately rewarded with success.

Michael F. Rosenthal became the agency's first Executive Director who, in just two years with much enthusiasm and dedication, guided the City's so-called B-1 Urban Renewal Project from infancy to final federal approval as well as securing federal approval for the Maple Manor Elderly Housing Development in West Lebanon. His departure upon appointment by Governor King as Coordinator of Federal Funds for New Hampshire left a huge void. This void would not last long, though, as Mr. Rosenthal was soon replaced by none other than Anthony W. Romano, who began the first of his two terms of tenure as LHA Executive Director overseeing the completion of Urban Renewal and Rogers House elderly housing in 1970, and ongoing construction at Maple Manor while starting the planning and approval process for Riverside Circle family housing in West Lebanon before leaving in 1971. His tenure was soon hyphenated by Pete "Jack" Moseley who oversaw completion of Maple Manor (1972) and Riverside Circle (1973). After Mr. Moseley left LHA for a private venture, the late Anthony "Buddy" Romano returned to the LHA helm as Executive Director in 1977. It was during this second term that he oversaw development and completion of the Lebanon Towers elderly housing in 1984 as well as rapid development and expansion of the Section 8 Tenant-Based Housing Assistance Payments Program in private rental

apartments throughout the City. His many years of service and that of long serving Commissioner Dr. Gordon K. Place, DC, Chairman of the LHA Board, were recognized by the renaming of the Riverside Circle street as Romano Circle and dedication of Doc Place in the Romano Place development in West Lebanon. Succeeding Mr. Romano in 1996, Jonathan K. Chaffee in his tenure oversaw the construction of the Romano Circle Community Building and various development renovations as well as completion of the Romano Place Development in 2010. His successor and current Executive Director, Ditha A. DeSimone continues the legacy of dedicated service with upgrades to LHA computer equipment and security systems, new renovations for ADA compliance, institution of state of art professional protocols and launch of the first LHA website to reach new generations of families in need of affordable housing.

The many years of loyal and dedicated service of LHA Directors and Commissioners, past and present, is complemented by the dedication and experience of the LHA professional staff who on a daily basis strive to offer efficient and knowledgeable service to their Lebanon clients and neighbors. It is with this goal and LHA's current mission statement in mind that this Public Housing Agency looks forward to providing many more years of unparalleled service to those in need of affordable, decent, safe and sanitary housing within the City of Lebanon.

In the fifty years since 1964, the efforts of past and present LHA Directors, Commissioners and staff to secure and utilize essential federal funding for this Agency's varied developments and programs have achieved many successes in the face of adversity. History is now on the side of the Lebanon Housing Authority displaying to the citizens of Lebanon and the surrounding Upper Valley the great asset and sustained affordable housing resource it has become for the community.

Respectfully,

*The Commissioners of the Lebanon Housing Authority*

*July 16, 2014*