

Review of Housing Status Study

On Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 15 and 16, there was a meeting held in Anchorage concerning the progress of the Alaska Native Housing Study. The purpose of the meeting was an informal review of the present status of the project by two review panels appointed for that purpose.

On the review panels were representatives from various regional housing corporations, Native non-profits, AFN, RurAL CAP, and other Federal, State and private agencies.

This study was begun last summer by the Department of Housing and Urban Development under contract to NBBJ, an Anchorage-Seattle based consulting firm. The intent of the study as originally defined was to catalogue the needs and requirements of Native housing; to evaluate past and present design and delivery systems; and to recommend new approaches for rural housing construction which will overcome past failures.

It is very important to rural Alaska that this study be done well, as it is likely that its recommendations will be used as a blueprint for future HUD housing programs.

The study director, Dave Haworth of NBBJ, began the meeting with a current status report. To date, the main accomplishment has been the consolidation of all current housing data into one large volume.

In the near future, village surveys will be undertaken.

Two study teams will be visiting a large number of rural communities; one effort will survey individuals to get their reaction to the kinds of homes they want for their villages, and the other effort will examine houses built under various programs in order to test their effectiveness.

A tentative schedule of villages in which houses will be examined was presented to the review committees. The villages chosen were felt to be representative of housing needs, and could provide a good contrast housing programs, both successes and failures; but it was felt by many of those present that more time needed to be spent in each village.

The travel schedule called for 18 villages to be visited in a two week period.

This was felt by some to be an insult to the villagers, and others familiar with village travel strongly stated that the kind of information needed could not be collected in such a short amount of time. After a long discussion, the study director agreed to revamp the travel schedule so that more time could be spent in each village.

Getting accurate information without offending the village residents was the main concern of the review panel members.

As a result of the changes, the specific information concerning the village visits by study members is not available at this time. It will be forwarded to you as soon as it's available. In the mean time, if there is anything you wish to know about the status of the Alaska Native Housing Study, contact me at any time.