



Jarrett Barrios and Estelle Richman joined the of POAH Board of Directors in July. As they complete their first 90 days on the board we asked them to share their views about POAH's goals and activities.



Jarrett Barrios is CEO of the American Red Cross of Massachusetts. He served in the Massachusetts House of Representatives and Senate for nine years. In the House he authored legislation creating the state low-income housing tax credit and a statewide affordable housing trust which provide incentives for developers to create affordable housing. In the State Senate, Barrios authored a law designed to protect homeowners from foreclosure and to crack down on unscrupulous subprime lenders. The law created a first-in-the-nation requirement that mortgage bankers and brokers abide by the state Community Reinvestment Act, which previously applied only to credit unions and banks.



Estelle Richman has an extensive background in public service - as the Acting Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer of HUD and before that as Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. Most recently, Richman was named Philadelphia Housing Authority Board Chair to oversee operations of the agency while it was under federal receivership for two years. She helped install a new management team and procedures that moved the agency forward and restored its credibility. As Senior Advisor to the Secretary of HUD, Richman provided oversight and management over the intersection between housing and social services and advised on the HUD budget.

In your view, what does POAH need to do to position itself to meet the ever-growing need for affordable rental housing amid stressed and uncertain federal housing budgets?

Barrios: Continue to develop models, best practices and innovations that are smart and effective. Creating private affordable housing allows POAH to use tools and staff resources in creative ways that the public sector is not often able to execute. POAH needs to help government refine its policies because even though government makes those policies, it relies on providers like POAH to implement them in cost-effective ways. So it is our obligation to provide the feedback, to be part of new solutions and to ultimately contribute to the development of those policies.

Richman: Budgets are frequently tight and unpredictable. In this climate POAH needs to work with the federal government to keep them abreast of community needs. The organization should research new markets and determine whether there is a match between their needs and our housing.

How do think your particular career experiences will inform the oversight and direction you bring to POAH?

Barrios: As the executive director of the American Red Cross of Massachusetts, I work every day with people who have been displaced from their homes as a result of a natural disaster or some other crisis – some 1,700 families in this state alone who have lost everything and are looking for a permanent place to live. I see my work with POAH as a continuation of my work at the Red Cross – the need to get families into long-term, stable living situations for themselves and their children.

Richman: My background is in healthcare and social services. It has been becoming clearer that good healthcare outcomes are increased if people are in safe affordable housing. As the Affordable Care Act is implemented we will see more integration between housing, social services and healthcare. I believe my background can help guide POAH as we explore partnerships and relationships.

Now that you've learned a bit about POAH, which of its current or planned activities are you most excited about and which do you think has/have the most potential for moving the organization forward?

Barrios: I really feel really excited about The Whittier Street Apartments redevelopment in my part of town [POAH's partnership between the Boston Housing Authority and Madison Park Community Development Corporation which will jointly apply for a Choice Neighborhood grant to redevelop the site.] I'm equally enthused about the Woodlawn redevelopment in Chicago that is combining mixed uses and bringing to life an urban area that had been abandoned and neglected.

Richman: I am very excited about the attention social supports are getting in the organization and by the Board. POAH understands that its residents will be best served when they have access to services like health care, childcare, employment and educational opportunities. I believe that POAH will be the trailblazer and set the standard for others in the business.