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Public housing director hired

By Don Ahern
Staff Writer

The man who runs the public housing agency in Minneapolis will take over as executive director of the St. Paul Public Housing Agency in August.

Jon Gutzman, director of public housing with the Minneapolis Community Development Agency, was

hired by the PHA's board of commissioners Thursday.

Although there is more public housing and a larger budget in Minneapolis, Gutzman will be the chief executive officer of the St. Paul agency. He will be in charge of 4,400 units of public housing and a budget of about \$20 million a year.

He currently is second in com-

mand under the MCDA director. In St. Paul, he will run the agency and report directly to the board of directors.

Gutzman said the main reason he is jumping the river is because "I'm not really in charge here. For me, it is a career opportunity."

With the increased responsibility, Please see Gutzman/13A

Gutzman

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will come a pay raise. He is making \$56,000 in Minneapolis. The pay range for the St. Paul job is \$58,000 to \$68,000.

The larger figure is what retiring PHA executive director Marshall Anderson was getting as full-time pay.

Friday was Anderson's last day on the job, although he was working part time for the past few months.

Anderson had been the director since the PHA split off from the St. Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority 10 years ago. Before that he was in charge of public housing under the HRA.

Since the split, the PHA has been a separate, independent government subdivision. It is not part of the city, and its board owns all of the public housing property, according to Barb Grossman, who will be acting director until Gutzman arrives.

The only connection to St. Paul is that the board members are appointed by the mayor and approved by the City Council.

Anderson announced his retirement last fall. He intended to leave Jan. 31, but extended his stay on a part-time basis until a search committee could find a replacement.

That was supposed to be last winter or spring. But in March a PHA board committee was dissat-

isfied with the candidates it had found in a regional search. The committee started over again and waged a national search.

Gutzman said he did not apply during the first round because "I thought it was wired for some internal candidate."

Gutzman, 37, has been with MCDA since 1980, first as the assistant director of public housing. He became the director in 1984.

Grossman said that under Gutzman's leadership, public housing in Minneapolis staged a dramatic turnaround.

He completely restructured the public housing division, which has more than 250 employees, she said.

The vacancy rate of family housing units, which plagued MCDA in the past, was sharply reduced from nearly 20 percent to about 3 percent.

He also conceived and implemented what became known as the "adopt a hi-rise" program, under which corporations provide financial assistance and services to selected elderly residences. The program has benefited nearly 1,000 residents in six buildings, Grossman said.

But he has "no immediate plans to shake up the (St. Paul) agency," Gutzman said. He added that "the course they have been on under the previous director was well thought out by the board."