

**SEATTLE RENTERS' COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

Monday April 2, 2018

6:00 – 8:00 PM

Seattle City Hall, Rm L280 Boards & Commissions

Approved May 7, 2018

**Commissioners Present:** Beverly Aarons, Jack Barker, Sherry Collier, Jessie Jacobs,  
Calvin Jones, David Mooney, Laurie Rocello Torres, Jessica Westgren

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**Commissioners Absent:** David Mooney, Michael Padilla Ocampo

**Commission Staff:** Maureen Sheehan, Department of Neighborhoods

**Guests:** John Howell, Cedar River Group  
Ted Virdone, Legislative Assistant to Councilmember Sawant

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*Seattle Renter's Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript, and represent key points and the basis of discussion.*

**Welcome & Announcements**

- Ms. Sherry Collier called the meeting in order.
- Ms. Maureen Sheehan announced she received 55 applications for the 2 commission appointed seats. Applications will be accepted until April 12<sup>th</sup>.
- The July and September regular meetings will be rescheduled because they fall on a holiday week (4<sup>th</sup> of July and Labor Day). A doodle poll survey will be sent out to determine availability.
- There are 3 mayoral and 3 City Council appointments in the pipeline.
- The RSJI training scheduled for April is postponed until May. OCR will contact 4 Commission members to discuss training content. Ms. Beverly Aarons commented that the full Commission should be involve and have input on the content of the RSJI training. Ms. Sheehan asked Commissioners to submit comments or suggestions about what the RSJI training like by April 9<sup>th</sup>.
- Mr. Clifford Cawthon announced that there will be a community meeting orientation organized by the CID to address development concerns, displacements and inequality on April 16<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. He encouraged Commissioners to attend and hear what the issues are and offer practical solutions.
- Ms. ChrisTiana Obey Sumner announced that as a co-chair of the Seattle Commission on People with Disabilities, she would like to see if there are any interest from the Commission to have a conversation with Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda about an intersection of being a person with disabilities and how it affects housing.

**Minutes Approval**

There was a motion to adopt the minutes from March 5, 2018, and it was seconded. The Commission voted, and the motion was adopted.

**Action: Work Plan**

- Mr. John Howell reminded that the Commission is required by an authorizing legislation to develop an annual work plan to be reported to the Mayor and City Council.

- The goal is to approve the work plan and decide how to communicate with the Mayor and the City Council about the work plan.
- Mr. Calvin Jones commented that the housing supply group met and decided that Mandatory Housing Authority (MHA) is a top priority. The last public hearing will be on June 28<sup>th</sup> and requested if this topic can be scheduled earlier so that the Commission can make a statement sooner rather than later.
- Mr. Howell commented that as part of the work plan discussion, any of the prioritized topics can be rearranged based on when the City Council will be making their decision.
- Ms. Jessica Westgren commented that it will be impactful if members of the Commission are present at the public hearing and to convey its approved statement about affordable housing in front of a larger audience.
- Mr. Cawthon commented about the events that happened in the past week that affect renters and suggested if it is possible for the Commission to create a mechanism in communicating and making statements sooner about hot button issues.
- Mr. Howell commented that there will be hot button issues that will be introduced to the Commission very rapidly in the coming years and it will be up to the co-chairs to communicate and converse about how to proceed in rearranging and postponing these scheduled topics.
- The Commission unanimously approved the annual work plan with a change to move the MHA discussion from July to June and the June presentation to July.
- A draft letter was created and distributed to the Commissioners for review that summarizes the current work of the Commission so that it can be conveyed to the City Council and the Mayor.
- Ms. Sheehan noted that the co-chairs will represent the Commission to the City Council to share about the work plan. Ms. Laurie Rocello Torres suggested to submit any comments and changes to the letter to Ms. Sheehan.
- Ms. Sheehan added that the letter will make its way to the City Council and the Mayor by the end of the week.

#### **Briefing: Economic Displacement Assistance to Low-Income Households**

*Ted Virdone, Legislative Aide to Councilmember Kshama Sawant*

Mr. Virdone provided an updated overview of the Economic Eviction Legislation regarding helping renters facing economic eviction. The legislation has not been introduced to the full City Council. Mr. Virdone asked the Commission to formally support the legislation and continue to weigh in and provide feedback before the actual endorsement.

- There was a motion to support the draft Economic Displacement Assistance to Low-Income Household legislation that was presented and any subsequent substantive changes to the draft that will be submitted and made available to the Commission, and it was seconded. The Committee voted, and the motion unanimously passed.

#### **Discussion: Outreach Strategies and Approaches for Engaging Renters**

- Mr. Jones asked the Commission about what effective renter outreach looks like and what the Commission should do to implement the feedback.
- Ms. Westgren commented that an effective outreach involves an effective social media presence 24 hour a day either via Twitter, Facebook, etc. She suggested having a social media presence outside DON.
- Ms. Aarons commented that an effective outreach strategy involves a ground presence and directly reaching out to vulnerable communities. Social media is a great idea, but it also has challenges such as social and racial divide, race, class, and language barriers and access to the Internet. She also followed up on her comment shared to Deputy Mayor Ranganathan, about reimbursing at least one

Commissioner seat, so that someone who would need to miss work for find childcare can be a Commissioner.

- Ms. Lopez commented that an effective outreach is to let the public know what the Commission is trying to do and how the actions of the Commission will impact them.
- Mr. Cawthon commented that having meetings besides downtown Seattle in neighborhoods such as South Park, CID, New Holly, Skyway, etc.
- Ms. Torres commented about mailing brochures and in different languages. She supports having community meetings outside downtown Seattle, but it would require logistics, accessibility, and other assistance such as transportation, child care, interpreters, food, etc.
- Ms. Sumner commented that the Commission should investigate having partnership with organizations that have established and organized outreach programs to vulnerable renter communities.
- Mr. Howell added that he received feedback from different City Departments and had asked how the Commission can could help them connect with the renters through different public processes. He noted that these City Departments have funds to do an outreach, but they do not know how to go about it.
- Ms. Collier suggested going to festivals, community events, Bumbershoot, and coordinate with the City regarding outreach.

### **Public Comments**

- **Ms. Rosie Cullen** commented that she applied for the open Commissioner's position and she works with the youth that experience foster care and homelessness throughout the City.
- **Mr. Devin Silvernail** commented that he applied for the open Commissioner's position and mentioned that he has done work with renter issues.

### **Breakout: Working Groups**

- Editor's Note: The Commission broke into their working groups for discussion.

### **Commissioner Opportunity to Share**

- Mr. Cawthon mentioned that the King County Superior Court struck down the "first in time" law that allows landlords the ability to discriminate renters. He suggested that the Commission should write a statement in support of the renters. He also mentioned the Seattle City Council voted to waive the rule on new developments requirement to include on-site that would lead to further gentrification of neighboring areas.
- Ms. Westgren commented that she was in favor of the parking legislation that was passed by the City Council. She noted that it is an option not to build parking and not a requirement. To make affordable housing, the City Council would like to give developers an option not to build parking under the guidelines that it should be in an urban village and meet frequent transit. She mentioned that the Renter Protection Law group will be meeting soon and maybe discussing the "first in time" law.
- Mr. Jones mentioned that on April 16<sup>th</sup>, there will be a public hearing for Districts 3 and 7 about MHA. He will provide more details via email to the Commission.

### **Adjourn**

No further business being before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:01 p.m.