

**SEATTLE RENTERS' COMMISSION
MINUTES**

Monday May 7, 2018

6:00 – 8:00 PM

Seattle City Hall, Rm L280 Boards & Commissions

Approved June 4, 2018

Commissioners Present: Beverly Aarons, Jack Barker, Clifford Cawthon, Sherry Collier, Calvin Jones, Daniela Lopez, David Mooney, Christian Obey Sumner (phone), Michael Padilla Ocampo, Jessica Westgren

Commissioners Absent: Jessie Jacobs, Laurie Rocello Torres

Commission Staff: Maureen Sheehan, Department of Neighborhoods

Guests: Maureen Kostyack and Lindsay Masters, Office of Housing (OH)
Nicolas Welch, Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD)
Jesseca Brand, Department of Neighborhoods (DON)

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 reminded Commissioners to complete the form acknowledging their eligibility to be on the Commission.
- Ms. Jessica Westgren, Mr. Clifford Cawthon and Ms. Laurie Rocello Torres are reviewing the applications for the two Commission appointed seats.
- The Commissioners who will interviewing the applicants will be notified shortly when it will take place.
- There is also one open Council appointed seat.
- The July and September regular meetings have been rescheduled due to the holidays.

Minutes Approval (00:02:15)

There was a motion to adopt the minutes from April 2, 2018 with an amendment by Ms. Beverly Aaron's comment of a discussion with the Deputy Mayor regarding a possible financial reimbursement for one Commission seat, and it was seconded. The Commission voted, and the motion was adopted.

Briefing: Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) (00:04:27)

Seattle Office of Housing (OH)

- Ms. Maureen Kostyack and Ms. Lindsay Masters presented an overview of the Office of Housing (OH)
- OH focuses on the following programs: investments, lender and policy organization, rental housing and preservation, affordable housing within the market rate and first-time homebuyers. Rental housing is the biggest program.
- The program's primary focus is to create long-term and permanently affordable housing. At a minimum, projects must remain affordable for 50 years.

- A commissioner asked what the definition of affordable was. When it comes to investment programs in affordable housing, there is both a limit on rent or a sale price that the tenant or an owner must pay and a limit on a person's income that demonstrates their need for housing. Most housing programs that OH funds are determined by a typical household income that meets an income limit based on the Seattle/Bellevue region. There are programs where the actual rent is based on the actual household income such as the Section 8 programs.
- Programs serve a wide range of population with significant emphasis to seniors, person with disabilities, homeless population, etc.
- The mission is to further fair and affordable housing to every neighborhood in the city. There has been an ongoing and active effort to create affordable housing, but zoning has been the primary barrier for not being able to access other neighborhoods.
- A commissioner commented about reserve funds for capital projects and ongoing maintenance and if these homes are kept affordable for 50 years or in perpetuity. The big part of the role of OH, in addition to providing upfront capital investment, is ongoing monitoring. OH has policies about annual reserve deposits for adequately planning for building maintenance.
- A commissioner asked about the percentage of the housing that is affordable into perpetuity. Legally, OH is not able to put a permanent conveyance due to state laws. The longest restriction is 55 years.
- A commissioner asked about data regarding rent burdened renters in the City that meet these qualifications and the rate of these units being built compared to market rate properties.
- There are about 45,000 cost burdened households in Seattle and approximately 41 - 42,000 are low income that qualifies them for the types of programs OH administers. The greatest need is for extremely low income.
- A commissioner requested data that shows how many rent burdened people are leaving Seattle compared to how many non-rent burdened are coming in.
- A commissioner asked if there are mechanisms where a small non-profit organization or community group can fund or build affordable housing and does OH partner with community organizations to proactively meet these objectives as projects are developed. OH participates in many ways such as making loans for land acquisition and access to properties as well as financing availability that targets in big transit areas.
- Ms. Kostyack commented about the rent-burdened and mentioned residence preferences that are consistent with fair housing laws and they will have listening sessions and do data work to analyze the displacement trends.

Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA)

- The primary purpose is to create more affordable housing. The performance goal is to create at least 6,000 affordable housing units in 10 years by requiring developers to support affordable housing by including affordable units in their development or make payments to OH who will use the funds to make advances in affordable housing programs.
- Mr. Nicolas Welch presented how MHA works through enacting MHA rezones in communities with recent planning processes and with citywide implementation.
- Ms. Collier commented that the goal of the Commission is to ideally to make a statement about MHA and asked if the Commission has what it takes to make the statement.
- Ms. Jesseca Brand commented that the Commission should weigh in. It is vital to hear from the people that experience these kinds of struggles such as rent increases.
- Mr. Welch commented that they could provide more information or questions about MHA. He also noted that the City Council is considering this now and the Commission can testify at the City Council public hearing on MHA.

Commission Deliberation (01:10:57)

- The Commission deliberated and agreed that they want to participate in the public testimony at the City Council and submit a written statement.

- Ms. Sheehan suggested that doing both the public testimony and a written statement.
- There was a motion to endorse the MHA as presented and it was seconded. The Commission voted, and the motion passed unanimously.
- The Commission decided to have the Housing Supply Work Group draft a statement letter and have the full Commission review and provided feedback at the next meeting.
- Ms. Sheehan emphasized that the Commission will be endorsing the content of the letter at the next meeting and authorizing the Housing Supply work group to draft the letter.
- A suggestion was made to have the draft letter be shared in a Google Doc so Commissioners will be able to provide comments and feedback prior to the next meeting.
- Ms. Sheehan asked to have the draft letter with comments and feedback no later than May 28th.

Training: Race and Social Equity (01:36:11)

- Ms. Sheehan shared that OCR recommended a three to four-hour training on Race and Social Equity at a minimum.
- The Commissioners discussed extending the regular meeting by an hour to accommodate the training
- Ms. Sheehan suggested having the meeting from 6 to 9 pm and discuss any business-related items in the first 90 minutes and have the Race and Social Equity training in the last 90 minutes.
- She added that she will go back and have a conversation with OCR to reflect the suggestions presented by the Commission and report back at the next meeting.

Public Comments (01:51:30)

- **Mr. Manuel Vengas** via written statement on behalf of Mr. Venegas of the Seattle LGBTQ Commission commenting on how their Commission can partner with the Renter's Commission on mutual areas of interest. The letter mentioned that the LGBTQ Commission has been following MHA, HALA, etc. Any questions or information can send an email to lgbtq.commissioner.manuel@gmail.com
- **Mr. Devin Silvernail** commented that he applied for the open Commissioner's position and mentioned that he wanted to observe and get up to speed on what is going on the housing affordability issue. He commented about the MHA presentation and noted that the Commission should endorse the idea but keep in mind that it must do more to resolve the issue.

Work Group Report Out (01:56:00)

- Ms. Beverly Aarons of the Rent control and stabilization work group reported that she researched the relationship between rent increase to inflation and there are three cities (San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and New York) that have this program and shows that the system produces more housing unit per capita. She added that she will explore further about the relationship between rent increase and wages. She also added that there are anti-price gouging laws in California that landlords cannot raise rental rates by 10% or they will face fines or imprisonment. She suggested that this could be a recommendation the Commission could explore.
- Mr. Clifford Cawthon reported about rental units that are tied to MHA and how to facilitate these units going back to the market.

Commissioner Opportunity to Share

[The group voted and agreed to spend the last five minutes of the meeting doing work group report out instead of the opportunity to share.]

Adjourn

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