

**SEATTLE RENTERS' COMMISSION
MINUTES**

Monday, April 1, 2019

6:00 – 8:00 PM

Seattle City Hall, L280 Boards & Commissions Room

Approved May 6, 2019

Commissioners Present: Farah Ali, Laurie Goff, Calvin Jones, David Mooney,
Michael Padilla Ocampo, Regina Owens, Devin Silvernail
ChrisTiana Obey Sumner, Jessica Westgren

Commissioners Absent: ChrisTiana Obey Sumner, Laurie Goff, Laurie Rocello Torres

Commission Staff: Amy Nguyen, Department of Neighborhoods

Guests: None

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

Welcome & Announcements

- Ms. Jessica Westgren opened the meeting. Brief introductions followed.

Minutes Approval

- There was a motion to adopt the March 4, 2018 minutes as amended, and it was seconded. The Committee voted, and the motion was adopted.

Rent Control Draft Statement

- The Rent Control/Rent Stabilization group read and presented their draft statement on Rent Control.
- The group asked the Commission to move forward with this statement so it can be presented to the Human Services and Equitable Development and Renter's Rights Committee.
- Mr. Calvin Jones wrote a draft statement about ADU (Accessory Dwelling Units) and he will work with Mr. Michael Padilla Ocampo to ensure that the research and data in both letters is consistent.
- There was a motion to approve the official Renter's Commission statement on Rent Control, and it was seconded. The Commission voted, and the motion passed.
- There was a motion to send the official statement to the Mayor's Office, City Council, Human Service Equitable Development, and Renter's Rights Committee, and it was seconded. The Commission voted, and the motion passed.
- Ms. Westgren read a statement from Councilmember Kshama Sawant's office to make a presentation at her Committee on April 9th or the 23rd. The co-chairs confirmed that they will be attending on April 23rd.
- A comment was made to have the Commissions official statement on Rent Control be available to the Renter's Commission website as well as to various newspapers and media outlets in the area before the April 23rd meeting.

Rental Rate Increases

- The Renter's Protection group presented their rental rate increase work.
- The group proposed a 180-days' notice for a rental rate increase to provide more time for tenants to prepare and seek any available resources or options.
- The group was not proposing for a cap on rent increase.
- A comment was made that landlords are incentivized to rent to higher income residents rather than low income. This was the reasoning to have a 180-days' notice to respond to a rent increase instead of 60-days.
- There was a motion to approve the official Renter's Commission statement on Rental Rate Increase and it was seconded. The Commission voted and the motion passed.
- There was a motion to send the Rental Rate Increase official statement together with Rent Control to the Mayor's Office and the City Council and it was seconded. The Commission voted and the motion passed.

Public Comments

- Dinah of the Tenant's Union commented that they are in favor of the proposed rental rate increase and rent control statement from this Commission. She encouraged having a hard cap increase rather than through inflation since her wages have not gone up with inflation. She added that they are committed to having rent control as a statewide policy. She also mentioned a law in the City of Seattle where a landlord can take up to six installments for leases that are six months or longer instead of paying an upfront first and last rent deposit.
- Ted commented that the inflation rate for last year was 2.7%, and with rent control the maximum amount a landlord could raise its rent will be 2.7% for that year.
- Valentin commented that he is in favor of the rental rate increase and rent control statement. He believes that having these policies in place will provide renters more rights, better protection from landlords and be treated fair.
- Christina who lives in the Kenton Apartments in Capitol Hill commented how the rental rate increase policy will have an impact to the tenants at her apartment building and some of them may not have any options or resources to come up with funds when their rent increase significantly. She added this proposed rate increase policy will be a tremendous help.

Commission Process & Procedures Discussion

- Ms. Westgren commented about absences and excused absences concerning Commissioner Laurie Roccello Torres. She noted that Ms. Sheehan has reached out to her regarding her absences and repeated follow-ups with no response.
- She asked the Commissioners to discuss next steps concerning Commissioner Torres' absence and participation to the Commission.
- Ms. Beverly Aarons made a motion to table the issue and have further discussion at the next meeting, and it was seconded. The Commission voted and the motion was adopted.
- There was a discussion about the attendance reset policy that was not stated in the process and procedures, and Ms. Daniella Lopez volunteered to draft a clarification on the attendance policy regarding a reset period. Ms. Westgren made a motion to have Ms. Lopez draft a clarifying statement on the attendance policy in the process and procedures, and it was seconded. The Commission voted and the motion was adopted.
- Ms. Westgren will reach out to Ms. Sheehan and Ms. Sumner to draft an email to be sent to Commissioner Torres about her continued interest and participation to the Commission.
- The Rules Committee commented about their work regarding conflict resolution, personal responsibilities, co-chair involvement and mediation.

- Ms. Westgren commented about a statement regarding resolving any conflict among themselves. She noted that this maybe uncomfortable to either parties if they try to reach out to one another and resolve it among themselves. She suggested that there should be a statement that addresses this issue.
- There was a motion to update the rules and procedures with the added suggestion, and it was seconded. The Committee voted and the motion was adopted.

New Business

- Ms. Westgren mentioned that she was approached by *The Urbanist* and they would like to invite the Commission as possible guest speakers at one of their meetings on May 14th at the Panama Hotel Tea & Coffee House to present the Commission's work. She informed Ms. Sheehan and Ms. Sumner and they suggested it be discussed with the full Commission.
- She noted that the presenting at their May meeting is too soon and suggested to have a meeting in June or July.
- She mentioned that having this opportunity can bring more exposure to what the Commission does for the City and to the community. She will reach out to *The Urbanist* and ask if a May meeting is possible to have the Commission attend and make a presentation.

Work Group Report Out/Work Time

- **Housing Supply** reported that a draft statement was written about the Accessory Dwelling Unit Reform. Mr. Jones mentioned that the public comment period is scheduled sometime in June, and he would like to have a final statement from this Commission published before that.
 - Mr. Jones mentioned that he will send out the draft statement to the Commission to solicit feedback and comments.
 - Ms. Westgren suggested having the draft statement be on the next month's agenda for the Commission to review and approve.
- **Outreach Strategies** reported that the group did not do any outreach activities, and the group will set up a recurring meeting schedule.
- **Rent Stabilization/Rent Control** reported about the Rent Control Draft Statement.
 - Ms. Westgren commented that there has been discussion about merging the Rent Stabilization/Rent Control and Renter Protection Laws group together. She added that she wants to make sure that the group has a quorum.
 - She commented about the work around Opportunity Zones that may come up later and noted that it may be a good idea of blending the two work groups together to work on the topic of Opportunity Zones.
- **Renter Protection Laws** reported about the Rental Rate Increases statement.

Commissioner Opportunity to Share

- Mr. Jones shared that there was an announcement that the Washington National Guard will be vacating a parcel of land in Interbay. He would like to have this Commission keep this topic on their radar.
- Mr. Devin Silvernail shared that one of the tenants from Milestone Properties complained about their landlord who ignores the Carl Haglund law by not doing any necessary repairs and keep increasing the rents on their tenants. There will be a meeting on Thursday, April 4th at 6:00 pm at Optimism Brewing Company in Capitol Hill to bring attention to the landlord. He encourages any Commissioners that can attend to show support and solidarity to these tenants.
- Mr. Ocampo shared that the Parks Department reached out to him and seeking anyone who are interested to be part of the Parks District Oversight Committee. The Committee is looking for Commissioners. Information can be found in the Seattle Parks District website.

- Ms. Westgren shared that the Urbanist is available to meet in May and she will send an invitation to the Commission when it is ready.

Adjourn

- No further business being held before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned.